# Shining Light

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# Shining Light

by TwilightMaster15

Summary

Bored beyond comprehension, Ryuk decides after seeing what humans do with the Death Note, to experiment with what would happen if a human lived their whole life with access and knowledge of the Death Note. This leads him to find four-month-old Light Yagami, whom he decides to use as his test subject and has a little fun.

Light's parents, as with anybody else, can't see Ryuk and thus think Light is possessed, so while trying to find answers, Soichiro turns to a young cadet for assistance taking care of his son.

Light grows up knowing he is different but rarely bored with Ryuk by his side throughout his whole life and having little interest in using the Death Note, training in Shinigami magic and learning the ways of the world instead. But things become interesting when, after multiple incidents regarding his secret, someone else with the Death Note begins using it as the mass killer known as Kira.

Add in a dumbfounded detective and a task force all aware of Light's situation and far past caring, and Ryuk knows he made the right choice because he's found plenty of entertainment, even though he has to fight the protective instinct he's developed towards Light.

# Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Ryuk had been told countless times throughout his long existence, that this feeling wasn't normal, or that there was something extremely wrong with him. And maybe there was because he was sure this feeling so terrible he felt as though he was going mad was not something the others experienced.

This feeling, as he had learned maybe a century ago from his elders, was boredom. He had heard others laughing and saying he was just young, and that was why he was different from the others who couldn't differentiate one day from the next until everything became an unclear blur.

For the others, they were content, feeling nothing, and existing for no particular purpose. Ryuk had heard tales back when he had first gained sentience that once the Shinigami were bowed down to by humans, and this now dead realm was beautiful. What had happened? He wondered every day, and he had asked countless questions about where they came from and what their purpose was other than playing cards and occasionally writing names of humans to stay alive. He knew that given a little time, every Shinigami just gave up on existence, whether from laziness or a sincere desire to not suffer through boredom, Ryuk didn't know.

The only life Ryuk knew was an uncontained feeling of no entertainment nor happiness, and as time passed, it was growing more and more frustrating to be bored. And once the frustration set in, the listlessness soon followed that only made boredom all the more unbearable. And as it reached that point, it became exhausting to do anything at all.

Maybe he wasn't so different from others if they had all reached this point and simply forgotten in the haze of existence. But what made Ryuk different was that he remembered it all.

He remembered the tiredness, the hysteria and insanity of craving to do something, *anything,* to get the boredom off his mind. He wished he could forget.

He was probably around nine-hundred when he came across Gelus, who was watching from an enchanted pool used for seeing humans to write names of. Ryuk looked down, "Whatcha looking at?"

Gelus looked up, "I'm watching the humans." Ryuk sat down with him, deciding to watch them too. He had occasionally done so, but usually, they were just walking around and minding their business. He frowned a bit at them, cocking his head as he noticed that some humans were carrying smaller humans. The tiny humans were very different from the big ones—they didn't seem to understand language, and shrieked a lot. Why did they do that?

Ryuk grinned a bit as an idea came to him. He didn't want to watch from afar. He wanted to go down there and see things for himself. The human world certainly was prettier to look at than the dusty wastes that were the Shinigami realm.

It took a little while to wait for another Shinigami to turn to dust from laziness, claim ownership of their Death Note left behind before it too turned to ash, and then steal Sidoh's for fun, sneaking down to the human world.

But once he got down there and saw the fascinating terrain, he knew that he never wanted to return to the dreary lands he had been forced to call home.

He wondered what a human would do with the Death Note, so he tried it with a couple adults, and he found himself very disappointed that most of them just screamed at the sight of him and renounced ownership, or they never used it to begin with. They were all so dull.

His mind wandered as he held one of the Death Notes in his hands, and he got a new idea. He had learned these tiny humans were called babies or infants, and they grew and learned to become adults. He hadn't really seen how babies work, and he was curious. What if he gave the Death Note to an infant and saw what happened as it grew up?

He laughed at the idea, flying down to one of the markets and stealing an apple. The plan certainly sounded interesting, but where was he going to find a tiny human? From what he could tell, humans were very protective of their offspring, so was it possible?

Ryuk looked up at the moon, still confused by the concept of humans differentiating the days using this sun and moon. It helped them have an idea of time and made it easier to remember things. *So interesting.*

He flew around this city he had learned was called Tokyo in search of a tiny human for which to stay until the end of its life to see what it did with a Death Note.

It was around midnight when he found what humans called the suburbs, and he peeked into different "houses" to see what there was to see. There were a couple babies, but all of them flipped out within seconds of seeing him, so he didn't get time to explain anything to it.

Then he found the Yagami household, as he saw was the name on the gate, and he looked inside, hearing the cries of an infant, and he found the little thing waving its arms and legs around, laying on its back in a wooden cage. Why was it crying? Maybe he could finally learn why they did that. Sure, the others had started, seemingly out of fear, but this one was already shrieking.

He stared down at the child, Light Yagami. Alright, this thing had a decent amount of lifespan—not much by Ryuk's standards of being close to a thousand, but for humans, almost eighty years was probably a lot. Time to see if this one was worthwhile. He tapped the thing—Light, he corrected himself, and it was a he, not an it—with the Death Note, knowing he would have to hold onto the notebook until the little creature was 780 days old so *he* could have official ownership. Looking at it, he guessed the creature was maybe a single hundred days old.

Light instantly stopped screaming and looked up at Ryuk with reddish-brown eyes. He was dead quiet for a moment before a smile formed on his face, and he laughed, utterly unaware of the miseries of human life, and how Ryuk had noticed misfortune befell humans who had ownership of the Death Note. His tiny hand grasped Ryuk's clawed finger and held tight, still smiling.

Ryuk backed up a bit, content to stare at the human from a distance. Light didn't seem to like that and rolled off his back, grabbing at the bars of his cage and using them to stand, bouncing a bit where he stood clearly off-balance and began making unhappy noises.

Did it just want attention? It certainly didn't seem afraid as it continued to bounce, its feet not getting off the soft surface it had been laying on, but the ground below it had a give, so he watched the baby's head bob up and down and up and down as he used one hand to let go of the bars and reach for Ryuk.

Deciding the baby wanted attention, he picked it up, realizing quickly

just by feeling it, how delicate humans were. He had to be careful, or he might accidentally kill it, and then where would he be?

Light laughed again, reaching up at Ryuk's face and smiling, before sticking one of his hands in his mouth. Ryuk examined the baby, noticing that while most infants seemed to be bald, this one had a full head of pale brown hair. All things considered, the tiny human was quite cute.

Did it talk? Did humans need to learn to speak?

Ryuk blinked, seeing Light was doing something new, putting one of his hands to his neck and then moving it down towards his stomach, and repeating this motion.

Well, now was as good a time as any to explain what he was doing here. "I am the Shinigami, Ryuk," he explained, and this didn't seem offputting to the human, who continued to giggle happily, reaching towards the notebook at Ryuk's hip, "That's right, that is a Death Note, and you have one too. You'll get to use it for whatever you want. Just make it interesting, and give me apples."

"Ry!" Light continued to smile, seemingly trying to say Ryuk's name, but settled for the moment on, "Ry!"

Ryuk reminded himself to add this to his journal of things he had learned about humans. So it seemed that infants were just as clueless as newborn Shinigami—they didn't know anything except a basic survival instinct, except tiny humans seemed to act upon it by screaming. It didn't make sense to Ryuk. When a Shinigami came to be, they just appeared the way they would be for however long they existed, but humans grew and needed to avoid things that could kill them, so why did they not know how to move around or speak their own? It seemed like a huge disadvantage.

But this human was different—there hadn't seemed to be anything wrong with him when he was crying, and he had stopped doing so when he saw Ryuk, which meant he probably just wanted attention. Was that normal? Something about this human felt almost like a kindred spirit, different from the rest of his kind.

He jerked to the side, startled when he heard a high-pitched scream from a woman who, judging by the name, was Light's... what was the word... mother? Yeah, his mother. And she couldn't see Ryuk, so to her, her offspring was simply floating in midair. He contemplated touching her with the Death Note but realized that might interfere

with his plans of seeing what happened if a human had the notebook their whole lives.

It did leave him unsure of what to do because now he had been caught holding the infant. Well, might as well have fun with this. Light's parents didn't have to know about Shinigami or the Death Note, but their son floating or random unexplainable happenings would be fun to cause and interesting to see the reactions.

He kept holding the baby and walked out the door into the hallway to see what there was to see in this house if he was going to be staying here for a while.

From upstairs, he heard Sachiko screaming for her husband, but seeing as there was no second person in the house, he realized she must be using a cell phone to get in contact with Light's father.

He put Light on the couch, and the baby flopped over, only to roll and support himself on the cushions so he could continue staring at Ryuk, once again loudly saying, "Ry!" as though that was his new favorite word. And from what Ryuk could tell, that might be his only word.

Sachiko ran down and noticed her offspring on the couch, and she rushed over to him, pulling him close and trying to assure him, and Ryuk laughed because Light was still smiling.

Yeah, this child wasn't like others.

*This is going to be interesting.*

Chapter End Notes

> I'm just gonna say, I am using anime years since it's easier for me to understand the tech of the time period, but I have read the manga. So the starting year here of Ryuk meeting Light is 1989.

# Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

> I have never gotten that many kudos so quickly. Glad to hear a lot of people like the concept.

"I'm telling you, Soichiro," Sachiko frantically tried to explain as dawn broke through the window, and her panicked husband had rushed home from an all-nighter at work to see what was wrong with their son. "He's possessed!"

Soichiro ran a hand through his messed-up hair. He had just gotten the promotion of a lifetime, one he hadn't dared to hope for years, but now on top of everything else going on in their lives, something was wrong with Light. He looked to the baby in question, who was sitting on the couch, smiling up at him and grabbing for him. He softened at the sight of his baby and picked Light up,

"Ry!" Soichiro frowned, hearing the delighted squealing from the child. He already could tell Light was far more intelligent than other children, but was he actually saying something, or was this only baby babble?

"He was floating!" Sachiko insisted, "He was crying and then laughing, so I came to check on him and—and he was hovering five feet in the air!"

"Sachiko," Soichiro held his son at arm's length. There certainly didn't seem to be anything wrong with him, except he was moving his hand saying he was hungry, "Are you sure you weren't half asleep?"

"Are you calling me a liar?!" Sachiko screamed, still clearly so horrified by what she had seen that she wasn't thinking clearly.

Soichiro was quick to set Light in his high chair and turn to assure his wife, "Of course not. I don't doubt what you saw. I was just suggesting that maybe it looked like Light was floating, but he wasn't."

Sachiko was pointing behind him, and Soichiro turned, only to jump back with a yelp as he saw that, sure enough, his son was floating.

Light didn't appear bothered by this at all, laughing happily and seemingly having the time of his life. For a moment, Soichiro had

nothing to say, too dumbfounded to process what was happening in front of him. But once Light was high enough in the air that even he wasn't tall enough to pull him down, he was snapped out of it and got on the couch with a broom to grab Light.

He used the broom and tried to slowly guide Light downward so Sachiko could grab him, but he quickly realized that Light remained unmoving, or floating around the room.

It took literally jumping off the couch and diving at Light, crashing into the table, to get Light down. Soichiro shielded his son with his body, pulling the baby close, glad he was finally down.

Light began to cry, and Soichiro held him gently, "Shhh, it's okay, Light. Nobody's going to hurt you. I've got you." He winced at the pain in his back, hating to hear his child's cries.

Sachiko looked on the brink of passing out, "There's something wrong with him, Soichiro!"

"I will agree there's something weird going on," Soichiro laid down on the couch, and Light was sitting on his chest. "What do you suggest we do?"

"We should go find some answers!" She pointed at Light, who had decided to lay on his stomach on Soichiro's chest, locked eyes with his father, and continued using sign language to say he was hungry.

Soichiro groaned as he sat up and put Light back in the high chair, grabbing some apple sauce and giving it to Light, who made a bit of a mess but was determined to feed himself. From the books he had read, Light was learning much faster than most babies did, and adding onto the floating, he wondered if there really was something else going on.

"If we're going to find answers, I doubt we can take Light with us since he's too young to be out adventuring for long periods," he looked to Sachiko, who had finally sat down and made herself some strong tea, "So what are we supposed to do?" He looked, and his eyes widened, seeing the apple sauce and the spoon were floating, as though something was feeding Light, who continued to happily say, "Ry!"

...

Ryuk observed Light's parents, laughing at their panic. He certainly hadn't expected the father to dive at Light like that—it had caught him off guard enough that he had let go. At the moment, he was trying to learn more about humans and noticed that what he was feeding Light seemed to be apples mushed up. He licked some off Light's cheek, causing the baby to giggle, and Ryuk frowned. It was inferior to fresh apples, but he supposed he would prefer this over no apples.

Sachiko and Soichiro continued to talk about what they planned to do, and it was highly amusing to Ryuk since the mother was talking about psychics and priests, which Ryuk knew full well would do nothing against a God of Death, but it did bring him pause. Some of the other humans he had used for amusement mentioned those who worshipped the guy on the cross—what was that religion called? Christianity, right?—liked to ruin people's lives for being different, so would this make the experiment harder?

Whatever. He could lay low if some exorcist tried to show up, and that would be even funnier if only the parents knew Light had an otherworldly friend.

Then they started talking about getting a "babysitter." Why would they want someone to sit on their baby? Ryuk looked at Light, who was staring back at him as though he didn't have any idea what was going on either. Light reached for the spoon and got back to attempting to feed himself. At least this kid wanted to be independent and survive—it made him above other tiny humans.

Well, whatever this babysitter was, it was without a doubt going to be amusing, and Ryuk knew without a doubt he had made the right choice with this human.

OoOoO

It was a week of searching for a babysitter who wouldn't question the floating baby before Soichiro decided to look into the police academy. A cadet would surely help him and at least not run away screaming. So he looked through the newest group until two names caught his eye.

Shuichi Aizawa was one of the newest cadets, one of the youngest in

his class, having turned eighteen about two months ago, but already had the best scores, and there were notes that he had the potential to rise in the ranks quickly. He seemed to have already developed a close partnership with Hideki Ide, which would become extremely useful as an officer.

So after the classes ended, Soichiro approached the young man, "Excuse me, you're Shuichi Aizawa, right?"

The boy looked up, and his eyes widened as he realized who was standing before him, "Superintendent Yagami!" He bowed, and Soichiro chuckled,

"It's alright. I've been looking at your scores, Aizawa, and I was hoping you could help me with something this weekend if you're available, and you can't tell anyone about what you see."

Aizawa looked up, "Of course! What do you need?"

OoOoO

Of all the things Aizawa had thought when Superintendent Soichiro Yagami, a legend at the academy, approached him personally and asked for a favor, he reasonably should have expected it to be babysitting. Yet, he still found himself perplexed by it. Why was the Superintendent asking a teenage cadet to watch his infant son for the weekend? Weren't there other, much more qualified people for that?

He shrugged, noticing a message from Ide on his phone, asking how everything was going with this new mission. He remembered the way Ide laughed when he told him about the assignment he had been given.

*"Do you even know how to take care of a baby?"* Ide had asked, and the answer was a definite no. Nevertheless, any shortcomings Aizawa may have in childcare were seemingly made up for in the form of a notebook he had been given the moment he entered the Yagami residence.

The Superintendent had specified that while working alone was preferred, he was allowed to use this as a test of his and Ide's partnership and call him if necessary. Knowing he could call his best

friend and partner was a significant comfort, but Aizawa was able to dismiss the Superintendent's concerns with nonchalance. How hard could it be to take care of one kid?

Light was sitting in his playpen in the living room when Aizawa found him, babbling in a language only he understood and seemingly satisfied with picking up and then dropping his stuffed fox in a repeated motion he must have seen as playing. Aizawa wasn't going to question the child's definition of playing, sitting on the couch, and reading through the notebook to understand what he was supposed to be doing.

Immediately, his brows furrowed as he noticed something unusual. *If the baby begins floating, use the butterfly net in the coat closet to get him down? What...?* He flipped through some more of the pages, his confusion only becoming more prominent the longer he read through the notebook's contents. Some of these messages made it seem as though the baby was possessed or something. Judging by the handwriting, these notes had been written by the Superintendent's wife. Aizawa may have been able to brush aside those notes if not for the grocery list pinned on the fridge across the room, with the same handwriting, except there it was much more notably neat and less frantic than in the notebook.

Okay. Evidence showed Aizawa couldn't afford to ignore the notes about possession, but as there wasn't much he could do with that information, he searched for something else he could use. Being trusted to care for the Superintendent's son was the highest honor he could be given, so he had to do his best with this.

One of the notes caught his attention. Light preferred when people spoke aloud to him. Aizawa looked up from the notebook and to the baby, who continued ignoring him. "Aren't you happy I'm here to take care of you, young child?" How was he supposed to talk to this kid?

Light glanced up from his fox, grinning as he looked up at Aizawa and answered, "No!"

Aizawa narrowed his eyes, "You know, you could at least pretend."

"No!"

How old was this kid again? Four months old? He checked the notes to confirm Light's age, but somehow, that confirmation only left him more confused. Were babies supposed to talk that early?

He shrugged. That didn't matter. What did matter was that, according to the notes, he was supposed to feed Light in about ten minutes. He took Light out of the playpen and brought him to the kitchen. Ten minutes was the appropriate amount of time to figure out how to feed him, wasn't it?

"Don't worry, I'm going to feed you. Just... uh..." Aizawa sat Light on the burner of the stove, his back resting against the wall, "Stay there." He took the bottle of milk out of the fridge, examining it carefully as though the bottle itself would provide him the answers he needed. "Warm the mild... How do I do that? Do I put it in the microwave?" he checked the notes with his free hand. "Warm water. Alright, I can do that..."

He moved Light off the stove burner and onto the counter away from the stove as he began the process of heating the milk. He could feel Light watching him intensely, and he couldn't shake the feeling Light was judging him. Aizawa frowned as he handed the bottle to Light, and he began to drink from it.

Light seemed normal enough, but Aizawa couldn't shake the small fear from the notes that, at some point, he would reach to grab this child, and Light wasn't going to be there anymore. He shook that off as ridiculous while scrounging through the fridge for baby food that could provide more adequate sustenance. Light may be abnormally intelligent, but there wasn't anything supernatural about him.

Alright. Next on the list was to bathe Light before bed. That was—

He turned around, and Light was gone.

"What the fu—Where did the kid go?!" Aizawa raced across the counter to search the other side, almost hoping that he had simply fallen off but at the same time being relieved to find no signs of injury he had somehow missed. Light wasn't there, and Aizawa looked around the main area and toward the closed door that prevented him from getting to the stairs.

Surely, a four-month-old couldn't have gotten far. How hadn't Aizawa seen or heard him leave? *I was kidding about him disappearing, but he's not here. Where is he?! The Superintendent is never going to trust me again!*

After desperately scouring through the room for well over five minutes, Aizawa froze when he heard the sound of a baby's laughter behind him. He turned around, and was met with the sight of Light

staring back at him, covered completely in dirt and dust bunnies, sitting on the couch and clapping as though nothing had happened.

*What the hell...?* Aizawa glanced to the side, and off to the side, concealed by the furniture closest to the television, he saw one of the vents on the floor had been opened. If the kid had gotten down there... how did he get out?

"How did you get there?!" He shouted incredulously, earning nothing but delighted laughter from Light. Aizawa sighed, picking him up and holding him at arm's length while carrying him up the stairs and into the bathroom nearest the nursery. "Alright, little Nightcrawler, here's how this is going to go. You got into the vents, so now I have a reason to bathe you." He set Light on the bathroom counter while he began filling the bathtub, "Stay there."

While he waited for the bathtub to fill, Aizawa sat on the closed toilet and contemplated his next course of action. So... the child had a tendency to get into places he shouldn't. Noted.

Out of the corner of his eye, he noticed Light beginning to move. He turned just in time to see Light try to crawl off the counter. He had to dive to catch the child and shield him from colliding with the tile. Aizawa huffed, looking down at the baby in his lap. "How are you doing, baby? Still hate me?"

Light blinked innocently up at him, and Aizawa could only sigh. "Is that a yes? I'm going to take that as a yes." He pursed his lips, realizing he didn't have a new onesie for Light. This time, he was not letting this kid out of his sight.

He hurried into the nursery and put Light on the changing table while he searched through the drawers for a new onesie, but his brows furrowed as he noticed a strange object on top of the dresser. "What the hell is this?" He picked up the silver object, turning around to Light as though the kid would have an answer for him, "Are your parents doing demonic rituals? Are they doing roleplay? What is going on here?"

Aizawa handed the object off to Light, flipping through the notes as he noticed Light happily gumming at it.

*"If Light begins behaving as though he is possessed, use the talisman. It seems to calm him down."*

The same frantic handwriting riddled through the rest of the

notebook. Was this meant metaphorically or literally?

Shrugging it off, Aizawa reached for the nearest onesie he managed to find, only for the clothing to be pulled from his hands by an invisible force floating out of his hand and down the hallway. "What the—?!" His eyes widened as he watched it go, not entirely processing what his eyes were telling him was happening, but he immediately began to chase after it. "Get back here!"

He snatched the onesie out of the air and looked it over for any runes or whatever nonsense he should be looking for. Maybe he should bring the butterfly net with him for this...

It was at that moment Aizawa realized with sinking dread that he had fucked up. He had left the baby alone.

He wasn't even surprised to find the baby had disappeared by the time he raced back to the nursery. "Shit."

He checked the bathroom to be sure and was relieved to find that wasn't where Light had teleported off to. The water was far too warm for a child, so he was content to leave that be and close the door behind him as he began his search for Light.

"Hey, kid, where the hell are you?" He called as he walked downstairs, mumbling to himself as he ran his hand along the wall, "Yagami-San didn't tell me his child phases through solid objects and gets into the vents. I should have asked about that."

He heaved a sigh of relief as he entered the main living area and found Light sitting in his high chair, happy as could be, while gumming at the talisman.

"Oh, you moved yourself back to the high chair." *This kid basically takes care of himself!* "You could have just told me you were still hungry instead of doing all that disappearing nonsense," he opened the fridge to finish the search he had started earlier before being sidetracked, "Do you like kewpie? Because that's all we've got."

The room was suddenly plunged into darkness. Aizawa sucked in a breath as he heard Light beginning to get fussy behind him. Maybe talking aloud would help? "Okay. Lights turned off randomly, no big deal." He spun around on his heel with the food, able to make out the outline of a child, and sat down next to him, "This is why you never want to work in suburbia for a family that looks perfect. You ever see a single Mom with a possessed child like this? Nooo."

Aizawa watched Light start eating his food, and he took that time to dig through the messenger bag over his shoulder and pull out the flashlight he kept inside for emergencies. He waited a few more moments before picking up the still-dirty baby and supporting him with his arm. Thank god the kid hadn't needed a diaper change yet.

He checked his watch with the hand holding his flashlight, giving him a dim look at the time. He hadn't been here for three hours yet and still had the rest of the weekend! That certainly explained why the Superintendent was paying him so well for this and giving him plenty of spending money to use as needed.

"Come on," Aizawa muttered, and Light stared up at him, "Let's go find the circuit breaker. This is gonna be a little adventure." Light seemed distinctly unamused, so he grabbed the talisman in the same hand as his flashlight, "Look, I have your favorite otherworldly Cthulhu toy." He handed it to the baby and wiped off the slobber which was covering it onto his jeans.

Where in the notes had the circuit breaker been? He didn't have enough hands or lights to properly check, so he had to go by his own deductive reasoning. He figured the circuit breaker would either be in the coat closet in the garage.

The creaking sound of an opening door made him jump slightly before he noticed the coat closet door opening in front of him. Aizawa expected Light to be alarmed, but instead, he giggled and used his free hand to make grabbing motions toward the open door, "Ry!"

Aizawa pursed his lips. He had been willing to pass over a lot of weird things, but somewhere between the floating onesie and now this door opening on its own and the baby being perfectly happy with this made him realize that maybe the whole "baby is possessed" thing in the notes wasn't as ridiculous as he had initially thought.

He shined the flashlight into the closet, and he swore his heart momentarily skipped a beat when he saw. In what he hoped was red paint were two words:

FEED ME.

Then he got his bearings and scoffed, looking down at Light, who was smiling back at him, trying his best to stave back his laughter, "I should pay your parents for this. This is the best first babysitting experience I could have had." He tilted his head to the side as he examined the paint, noticing it was nowhere near dried enough for it

to have been a planned prank or training exercise from the Superintendent. Even if it was, he was certain he hadn't been there when he grabbed the net earlier. "I've never gotten to fight the supernatural and deal with a poltergeist child all in one night." He gestured to the paint, "Can you get rid of this, kid? I don't want your parents to see this, and it looks like a pain in the ass to clean."

Did he actually expect a response? No. But his nonchalance made the baby laugh, and if he was keeping the kid happy, he at least had half of his job done. This whole situation was weird in ways he could have never prepared for, but if he was going to be a detective for the NPA, he couldn't run away because of some weird paint, floating onesies, and opening doors.

He casually flipped the circuits to turn the power back on, sighing in relief as his eyes readjusted to being able to properly see. Everything was going well. The baby was fed, clothing was collected, and supernatural occurrences were dealt with. The next thing on the priority list was to deal with the fact that Light was still covered in dirt and dust from the vents.

There was the small issue that every time he went to clean this child, something new happened in the world of demonology, but everything had been manageable. He wasn't going to let that stop him from doing what he had to do.

Walking back upstairs, he made quick work of getting Light into the tub in the seat meant for babies since Aizawa was pretty sure the typical infant bathtub off in the corner wasn't going to cut it with this disaster.

He was content to sit against the wall and let Light play with his rubber ducks for a little while. Aizawa only frowned slightly when he noticed Light putting all of the ducks on the edge of the bath in a line and then shoving them off, only to become unhappy when they actually fell where he couldn't reach.

Aizawa rolled up his sleeves, handed the ducks to Light, and used a wet washcloth to clean off Light's face. He used a cup full of water to get Light's hair wet, using his hand to shield the child's eyes from the water. Light fussed for a brief second, but he calmed quickly once he understood what was being done.

When he ignored the less-than-normal aspects of this, Aizawa decided that all things considered, this babysitting job was quite easy. Light

was extremely well-behaved, and if he managed to sleep well, this weekend might not be as insane as he had worried.

Light grabbed Aizawa's cap off his head, trying to put it on himself, causing Aizawa to roll his eyes and take it back from him, "That's not for you."

"Suchi!"

*Wait, what?* Aizawa stared down at Light, and Light was staring dead at him. He assumed the kid was trying to say Shuichi, but... he thought back to when he had first walked into the home and talked with Light's parents, realizing that, to his knowledge, he had only been called by his surname around Light.

How did Light know his name?

He shook it off. Of course, he didn't know everything, so maybe Light had just heard his name at some point before this. There was no need to add this to the list of weird things that had happened tonight.

Aizawa pulled Light out of the bath and dried him off, quickly grabbing a new diaper from under the sink and getting the kid ready for bed.

...

Ryuk watched the human boy who had entered his home, frowning deeply. Everything that had Sachiko screaming seemed to barely bother this new human! Shuichi was both parts fascinating and infuriating. He wanted to see humans screaming, and this one only responded with sarcasm and a lack of acknowledgment.

Time to pull out the secret weapon. He picked Light up.

Shuichi stared for a moment, blinked a couple times, and then didn't respond at all. He didn't even care!

"I've got your blanket," Shuichi said as though he was bored, "Do you want it, or...? Listen, as long as your head isn't doing 360s, I'm good—and no, that is not a challenge."

Humans not being afraid of him wouldn't usually bother Ryuk.

However, when he was actually trying to scare this human, he was quite put out by no dramatic reaction to his attempts. He had already eaten every apple in the house! Unless he could get this human to the store, withdrawals would start to kick in.

He still had the rest of the weekend to think of new things he could try. The boy's hair underneath his cap was fluffier than Ryuk had anticipated. Would touching his hair earn a reaction from him?

It was decided. Scaring Shuichi Aizawa would be a new project for his amusement, and he would not be satisfied until he got more of a reaction than quickly startled and then returned to normal.

...

Aizawa watched Light float down the hall and into his bedroom. "Alright, bye." He followed after the kid, lingering in the doorway and finding him hovering in the middle of the room. "Hey. Are you going to sleep? Okay." He closed the door, "Bye."

He went back into the bathroom to pick up the net, knowing he had nothing better to do than go into a room with a physics-defying child and whatever eldritch horror would be waiting for him on the other side. *Well, this is what I'm getting paid for. Doesn't hurt to have some more experience under my belt before I become a police officer. If I can take care of this kid, I can do anything.*

His hand hovered over the door, only to pause as he recalled the stuffed fox from downstairs, racing down to grab it in hopes of pleasing the child. He rested the plush toy in his bag as he opened the door, using both hands on the butterfly net to capture Light and lower him to the ground. Light dropped without warning, and Aizawa had to take advantage of quick reaction time to spin the net and instead catch Light and pull him into his arms.

"Don't do that," Aizawa chided him. "Gravity may be optional for you, but I don't want to make any phone calls to your parents." He laid Light down in his crib, and Light gleefully took his stuffed fox. Aizawa nodded to himself. "I'm going to go watch TV and wait until you inevitably wake up at 2am. Don't get demonically possessed while I'm gone."

He grabbed the baby monitor off the dresser and shut the nursery door behind him, and he made it about two steps down the stairs before he heard the door open behind him. Aizawa groaned as he spun around.

"What did I say about not getting demonically possessed? Stop opening the door!" He locked eyes with Light, who was staring back at him, and he shut the door again. Only for the door to open again.

Realizing this was a battle he couldn't win, he decided there was no issue in leaving the door open. He rubbed his eyes as he pulled his phone from his pocket. This may be a bit more than he could handle on his own...

He relaxed when he heard Ide's voice on the other end, *"Shuichi?"*

Aizawa adjusted his grip on his phone as he searched through the kitchen to make himself some coffee. "Hideki, I might need your help with this."

*"Why? It's just babysitting, right?"*

"Yeah, but there is a bit more here than I expected," Aizawa explained. "You don't have to help—"

*"I'll be there in half an hour. Should I bring something to eat?"*

Aizawa smiled. He knew he could count on his friend. "Yeah. I don't think turning on the stove or the oven is a good idea."

If Ide had any questions about the unusual remark, he hadn't commented on it yet. *"I'll see you soon."*

"See you soon." He hung up, looking back up the open door so he could keep tabs on the stairs. If they were going to get this done, they were going to get it right the first time and not fail the Superintendent.

Two police cadets against a seemingly superpowered or possessed baby. This wasn't anything close to what he had expected, but he had assured the Superintendent that his son would be in good hands, and he had no plans of letting him down.

# Chapter 3

Aizawa tapped his foot impatiently while waiting on the couch, taking a long drink from his third cup of coffee and staving back a groan since, five minutes ago, Light had decided to float down the stairs and onto the sofa, where he now sat, looking deceptively innocent.

Letting the child stay up late into the night was probably not the best idea, but what could he really do? If he was lucky, Light would go to sleep on his own when he was tired, and then they could just keep an eye on him.

He was already moving the moment he heard the fated knock on the door, practically throwing it open to bring in his best friend, who was holding... something.

"What the hell is that?" he asked, gesturing down to the thing wrapped in butcher paper in Ide's arms. "Look at the size of this thing. It looks like a floatation device made of meat!"

Ide shrugged his shoulders as he looked down at the thing as well, "I wanted to order whatever takeout I could find on the way, but Obaachan overheard our conversation and said to take this uncooked meatloaf over for the weekend." He smiled sheepishly, holding it up, "Sorry."

Aizawa rolled his eyes, resting his hand on Ide's shoulder comfortingly, "Don't worry about it. I'm just glad you could be here," he urged Ide to come inside, gesturing down the hall while Ide kicked off his shoes. "The little gremlin is on the couch last I che—hey!"

They had returned to the living area just in time to see Light had crawled across the room and was trying to lift up the grate to the vent again. Aizawa ran over to stop him, cringing as he realized the kid needed a diaper change. He held Light at arm's length for Ide to take, "I'll deal with finding a recipe. Hideki, can you...?"

Ide nodded, resting the meatloaf on the counter and taking Light from Aizawa, "That won't be a problem for me," his eyes scanned over Light for signs of something else being amiss, "Is this why you needed my help?"

Aizawa had to consciously fight back a laugh. He should warn Ide what was about to happen, but he knew that even with the long-

standing trust between them, he would not believe this until he saw it himself. "No. You'll see."

...

There was something Aizawa wasn't telling him. Ide didn't think much of that as he walked upstairs to change the kid. Aizawa had admitted when he was given this assignment that childcare was outside of his usual day-to-day routine, so he hadn't been surprised when Aizawa called him and said he needed assistance. This was why they were partners, wasn't it? To make up for one another's shortcomings and work together against anything that came their way?

Light didn't seem like a difficult baby. He was pretty compliant except for trying to roll off the table while Ide was putting on a new diaper and a onesie for him. That wasn't abnormal for infants once they gained mobility, but he could see why that may have freaked Aizawa out.

Ide smiled as he looked down at the smiling child, "You don't seem so bad," he tickled Light's exposed stomach as he buttoned up the onesie, earning small giggles...

Ide then sneezed, turning away for a split second, and when he looked back, Light was gone.

His eyes widened, frantically looking around to see where the kid could have possibly gone in the span of a couple seconds. *What just happened? Where did he go?! Oh… I see. This is what Shuichi meant.*

"Hey, Shuichi," he called nervously downstairs, "I think I know what you were talking about."

Aizawa shouted back immediately, almost as though he had anticipated this would happen. "He's down here."

How had he gotten downstairs? Ide had only looked away for a few seconds. He remained skeptical as he slowly walked down the stairs, but he knew Aizawa wouldn't lie to him about something like this.

Sure enough, once he made it into the living area, he found Light sitting on the floor in the kitchen area, watching Aizawa grabbing

ingredients out of the fridge and cabinets for the meatloaf. Ide also noticed that Aizawa never once fully took his eyes off Light.

"Why did you come down here?" He asked Light, staring down at the baby so much smaller than him. "If you can walk, why don't you figure out how to do this yourself? Why are you making me do it?"

"Do you see what I mean now?" Aizawa asked, leaning against the counter to fully face him while talking. "He's not poorly behaved. He's a sweet kid, but he's got this whole disappearing act and likes to get into the vents," he gestured vaguely at Light, "You wouldn't have believed me before, but since you've seen the disappearing act, I should also mention he floats."

Aizawa had him in the first half of that statement, but that second half had Ide blinking a few times, looking between his best friend and the Superintendent's son, almost asking for Light to confirm or deny this information. Aizawa shrugged in such a way that made it unclear if he was kidding or not, and he bent down to open the oven.

"Uh... yeah, you could probably fit a child in there."

"What the hell, Shuichi?"

Aizawa looked up as he closed the oven, then gestured to Light, "That just means we need to keep a better eye on him because the last thing we need is for him to disappear into the oven. Do you really want to be the one to call the Superintendent saying we accidentally cooked his son?" He sighed, rubbing the bridge of his nose, "Alright, I don't think Light can eat meatloaf."

"Maybe make him some scrambled eggs?" Ide offered, still hesitantly looking at Light, "You weren't serious about the floating thing, right?"

...

"Give it an hour or so," Aizawa replied, picking up Light off the floor and setting him in the high chair he had moved closer to the kitchen area. He locked eyes with Light, "Actually, is this dinner for us, you, or the supreme evil ones? Does Cthulhu actually eat eggs or meatloaf?" He could see Ide's incredulous expression in the corner of his eye, no doubt wondering how and why Aizawa had come to the conclusion to

butcher the use of the Lovecraftian entity so thoroughly. He wasn't sure Ide would forgive him for that, even after a proper explanation.

Light reached for him, "Culu!"

"Yes, that's right." Aizawa smiled, bending down to Light's level and ruffling his hair. "Is Cthulhu your friend?" Ide looked just about ready to strangle him, and Aizawa had to admit he was partially doing it because he loved seeing Ide's passion for the stories.

"Ry!"

"So... Cthulhu or Ry. Got it." Aizawa sighed, "Can you just do the floating thing real quick to show Ide?"

Light blinked before floating out of the high chair and hovering around the living area. Aizawa turned around to determine how Ide was taking this, finding him staring, mouth agape at what he was seeing.

"Regardless of whatever name you want to give it instead, can you see now why I can already tell we're going to be beating the shit out of Cthulhu with a duster or something?"

Ide continued to stare, white eyes never moving from Light for a couple more moments. By the time he snapped out of his shock, he had moved to the table, and Aizawa used the butterfly net to lower Light back into his highchair.

After another maybe two minutes, Ide stood up and made a beeline towards the liquor cabinet, "There's nothing like a glass of wine at midnight while babysitting a floating child."

"Hideki!" Aizawa couldn't help but laugh, even as he had to put himself between Ide and the alcohol. "We are underage and babysitting the Superintendent's son! We can't start drinking his alcohol!"

Ide slowly looked at Aizawa, his left eye twitching, before pointing behind them at Light. Aizawa also turned around to look at Light, who had escaped his high chair and... now a chair was floating?

He walked over, pulling the armchair down, "Can we put the chair down, please?!" He turned to Ide, putting on a casual smile to ease his partner's worries. "See, Ry isn't really sucking out the souls of the nonbelievers, he's just being a dick. There isn't really anything to

worry about besides that ominous message in the closet. I really do need to clean up."

"Sorry, what?"

Aizawa gestured for Ide to follow, pointing at Light, "Stay. Play with your fox." He took Ide's hand and brought him over to the closet, gesturing to the FEED ME in red paint.

"That—" Ide's hands flew over his mouth, no doubt more distressed by how potentially expensive that could be to remove than the message itself. "Is that what the baby did?"

"Possibly?" Aizawa shrugged, "I don't really know."

Ide took a step back, sucking in a breath, "Sure. Sure." He ran his hands through his hair, "Alright, I see what's happening here. This is some kind of baby X-Man. Our job is to look after the baby X-Man."

"Look at you using that term correctly," Aizawa encouraged, "Comics may not be the literary masterpieces you're used to enjoying, but they give us a good reference for what we're dealing with."

Ide shook his head in exasperation, "And yet you're the one who decided to call this Cthulhu? Did you even read the comics, or did you learn the story by other means and figure I would be interested?"

"You know me so well," Aizawa said cheerfully before returning to a more serious demeanor and contemplating this newfound framing of their situation. When put like that, it was something the average teenager wouldn't mind dealing with.

Thinking of the situation as babysitting as a kid with superpowers and something a little more than an imaginary friend was much better than saying he was possessed by the devil.

Something raced across his peripheral vision, and as he and Ide returned to the main area, Aizawa jumped in shock, seeing the meatloaf racing about an inch off the ground like a running animal, "Holy shit, the meatloaf's alive!"

Ide immediately grabbed Light, holding him protectively and jumping onto the couch. "What is going on this time?! Did the Superintendent not warn you about something like this?!"

Aizawa continued standing on the ground, watching the meatloaf

scuttle about in the confines of the living area. He dug into his bag and read through the notebook. "Use the holy water from the side room in the master bathroom. Okay then," he offered out his hand for Ide to take, "Come on, let's go upstairs."

...

So many things were happening at once that Ide could barely process it all before he was hit with something else. What the hell was going on?! Not even ten minutes ago, he found out the baby could fly, and now the meatloaf seemed to have gained sentience?! Ide shuddered as he watched it continue to fly around the living area. There was no way he would eat that thing. They were either ordering takeout or having sleep for dinner.

He supposed meatloaf wasn't as bad as what they would be experiencing as officers in the NPA. He wasn't necessarily afraid of the meatloaf or anything about the situation at hand, but rather so overwhelmed with everything he thought he knew being turned on its head. Serial murders and underground drug operations he had prepared for. *This* was not anything close to that.

He had been cradling Light in his arms when his thoughts were interrupted by Aizawa tossing him a bizarre silver thing. "Give this to him," Aizawa said, "Maybe it will calm him down."

*What...?!* "Is this some religious thing that will exorcise whatever is going on with the baby?" Aizawa only shrugged in response, completely unbothered by the fact their lives had suddenly become a shōnen manga. He trusted Aizawa's judgment, however, and handed Light the talisman or whatever it was. Light took it and began gumming at it. "Alright, are you okay? Are you still possessed?" He groaned as he was answered by the meatloaf flying past him at alarming speeds. "This thing is useless."

"Yeah, well, that's what the notebook says will help," Aizawa grabbed the butterfly net that had been leaning against the wall and smacked the meatloaf when it got too close to him. "Let's just get upstairs. Maybe something there will actually be useful."

Once they got upstairs, it took a moment of peeking through each door to determine which of the rooms was meant to be the master

bedroom, finding it by using the only identifiable feature in the form of the side room off of said bedroom—never a good thing to have.

Aizawa glanced around the room briefly before pulling open the door, and the moment he processed what he was seeing, he started hysterically laughing, catching Ide off guard. "Shuichi, what is it?"

...

No matter how hard he tried, Aizawa couldn't stop laughing at what he found inside the closet. "This is the closet!" He had to lean against the door frame to steady himself and ease his laughter. Only once he was sure he had calmed did he walk inside past the large cross and grab one of the couple dozen squirt bottles with more purification symbols than Aizawa could identify adorning them. "Holy water in a spray bottle?" He examined another shelf and found too many salt shakers to count.

Ide rested Light down on the bed and came in to survey the closet for himself, "Cloves of garlic, wooden stakes... this would certainly get the job done," he took the squirt bottle Aizawa offered him and sucked in a breath, "Please be there when I turn around." He turned and found Light still sitting on the bed, blinking at the squirt bottles his babysitters were wielding like firearms. "Good, you are."

Just for the hell of it, Aizawa squirted Light's forehead to see what would happen. Nothing did, and Light didn't seem too bothered other than making a startled little cry and then trying to use his sleeve to wipe the water away, only to fall back down on his back. That was what made him start to get fussy.

"Shuichi," Ide sighed, "Come on, what kind of parenting is this? No wonder this baby hates you." He picked Light up with his free arm and gently patted his back to soothe him, "There, there, Light, it's okay."

Light spit up all over Ide's shirt.

"He doesn't seem to like *you* too much either," Aizawa retorted.

Ide narrowed his eyes, looking down at his dirtied shirt and heaving a sigh, "I'll go find the laundry room and go shirtless for a while."

"So I take it I'm in charge of the meatloaf?" Aizawa asked.

"Are you kidding?" Ide rolled his eyes, "You didn't call me here just to have me watch. You take him," he passed Light to Aizawa, "And I'll be right back."

Aizawa and Light had a staring contest while waiting for Ide to return. Then Aizawa decided to put Light in his messenger bag to carry him around, leaving the bag open so the kid could still look out. Light was now making himself stand and gripping onto the side.

Ide came back, and despite having been told, Aizawa was taken off guard by the sight of Ide shirtless, holy water squirt bottles in hand. "We should be asking how they have so much holy water," Ide said. "How did they find all of this? Do you just put a cross on a container to make it?"

Aizawa stammered as he realized he had spaced out, "Maybe just boil the hell out of it," he offered, shaking himself and looking down at Light. "Ready, kid?" Light wasn't paying attention. He was too busy playing with his stuffed fox. "I will take your complete lack of acknowledgment as a yes."

Aizawa and Ide both had their squirt bottles ready like guns, looking around the ground floor and to the closed door containing the meatloaf.

"Alright, meatloaf," Aizawa called, "I've got something for you, you beefy bastard, come here!"

Ide counted to three, making sure Aizawa was ready before throwing open the door and running inside to catch the meatloaf off guard. "Shuichi, the meatloaf!" they both started mercilessly spraying the meatloaf until it landed on the floor, safe and sound. Ide grinned, "We have exorcised the meatloaf!" He paused, "That would sound unbelievably strange if it was out of context."

"No," Aizawa corrected, "That sounds just as weird with context. Are we going to cook this now?" Ide stared down at the exorcised meatloaf with a level of mistrust and borderline concern that Aizawa typically reserved for the idiots in their class.

"Should we eat it?" Ide asked cautiously.

Aizawa put a hand on his hip, "Who gave you such high standards? If you can't eat your food after it spent a few minutes floating around

the floor and pulsating menacingly, you don't get any dinner." He looked around the living area, "Alright, Ry, you like meatloaf?"

The television turned on, and Ide frowned, "I can't tell if that's a yes or a no." Aizawa again looked at the meatloaf before simply throwing some aluminum foil around it, sticking it in a pan, and then putting it into the oven for an hour.

"So..." he took Light out of the bag, "Tomorrow, we might need to go out and get some supplies."

"Like what?" Ide asked. "What can we possibly do against this? Do we need to get more holy water?"

"Trust me on this, Hideki," Aizawa grinned at Light. This kid had no idea what was coming, "I have an idea."

The radio started scratching loudly and ominously, and Aizawa pointed at it.

"Don't you talk back to me!"

OoOoO

Soichiro got back with Sachiko, who was clearly worried as they got back.

"It's been two days, Sachiko, and I trust these boys," Soichiro assured her, having gotten a call on the first night that Aizawa had called for Ide. This would be a good partner practice for them. "I'm sure Light is fine."

"It's not Light I'm worried about." Sachiko muttered, playing with her ponytail in an attempt to calm her nerves, "Could you possibly call that detective you were telling me about? The new one that appeared recently? What was the name...? No. No. What am I thinking? Having a professional detective involved in this will only put Light in danger."

"Are you talking about L?" Soichiro sighed. Even if he tried to be the optimistic one of the two of them, she had every reason to be concerned. "Sachiko, nobody knows how to contact L. L will never find out about what is going on with Light." He held her hand and

kissed it, "We'll figure this out, Sachi. Don't worry."

They walked in, and Soichiro had to pause for a moment at what he was seeing.

To start, a baby gate had been attached to the floor over the vent, and when they walked into the living room, they found both boys watching a movie. Light was playing with his fox and the talisman inside a reasonably large pet cage, which had been altered with some wood to turn into a side table for the couch. There was a baby monitor zip-tied to the bars of the cage, and a mattress had been placed inside. It was like a crib with a lid.

Aizawa looked up before jumping up off the couch, "Superintendent!" Both he and Ide bowed, and Soichiro was still staring at the new piece of furniture.

Ide realized what he was looking at and was quick to explain, "It was Aizawa's idea since Light kept opening the door and floating out every time we tried to put him to bed," he said. "Originally it was just a normal cage, but something kept causing it to be picked up, and we found it didn't happen as often if it was a piece of furniture. He floats around inside occasionally, but he's contained."

Sachiko bent down and unlocked the cage, taking Light out, "Hey, baby," Light giggled and wrapped his arms around her neck, causing Sachiko's worries to briefly subside. For that alone, Soichiro would be eternally grateful to these boys.

"I assume he gave you some trouble," he said reluctantly. "I apologize for not informing you ahead of time about what this would be, but as you can assume, no sane person would have believed my explanation."

"Other than the superpowers," Aizawa shrugged casually, "It wasn't that bad. He's well behaved." His brow furrowed, "Oh, there is one thing I was wondering about. Did you tell him my first name? He was calling me Shuichi or trying to."

Soichiro turned towards Light in alarm. When had Light...? "No, I only referred to you as Aizawa." He tried to think of any time he used Aizawa's first name, but nothing came to mind. He looked to Sachiko for any signs there may be something he forgot, but she was just as taken aback by Aizawa's claim as he was.

Everyone was quiet for a moment, and Soichiro looked back to the two teens who had managed to handle Light better in two days than

he and Sachiko had in a week.

"Can I hire you long term?" He asked. Both young men were clearly surprised and flustered, before getting it together, their eyes lighting up with excitement.

"I can make time," Aizawa agreed. "Might have to shift my schedule around, but it gives me something actually fun to do."

Ide also nodded, "I have time on weekends."

"Thank you, boys," Soichiro looked back at Light, "You have no idea how much of lifesavers you two are. Try to head home and get some sleep."

"Of course, Superintendent," both bowed and headed to leave, and Aizawa pointed at Light, who was waving to him,

"Be good for your parents, right, kid?" Light giggled as his babysitters left, and Soichiro could already tell that maybe this wasn't going to be impossible. He had some new books to see what could be done, so hopefully, this whole nightmare would be handled soon.

...

Ryuk pouted, very much annoyed that he hadn't succeeded this weekend in effectively scaring Shuichi Aizawa. Hideki Ide had shown fright a couple of times, but then Shuichi had to go and reassure him to ease his worries, and now Hideki was as unbothered by Ryuk as Shuichi was. Even worse, now it was harder to play with Light if he was in that cage. He needed to figure out how to open it, and then the issue would be resolved, but for now, that was frustrating.

At least the two would be back, because they were interesting, and exploring the city while they were shopping for supplies had been fun.

He looked at one of the open books for new ideas for having fun with what the humans believed to be accurate. It was honestly rather amusing seeing humans think some wood in the shape of a cross would do anything against a Shinigami, even if they had no way of knowing that was what they were up against.

He sat down in front of Light, who was trying to reach through the bars of his cage to reach the talisman he had dropped. Ryuk handed it to him and watched the infant play. What was Light thinking with his movements and play?

Humans were so interesting.

# Chapter 4

It was a routine at this point, Soichiro supposed, to check and make sure Light was actually asleep. He had to get up at 5am to get ready for work, and it was a coin flip whether or not his son would be actually in his crib or not. It would keep him awake at night, and there were days he would bring Light into his room and just cradle the small boy until he fell asleep.

Sure enough, Light wasn't in his room at all in the morning, and Soichiro sighed as he walked downstairs. Panic coursed through his veins, but he knew where to look before waking Sachiko about the possibility Light had flown out the window, which, to Soichiro's knowledge, he had yet to do. Though, in truth, he wouldn't be shocked if he heard it was happening often and Light was just coming back safe and sound after a late night adventure he was too young to be having. Just the thought and the fact there wasn't much he could do if that turned out to be true made him extremely uncomfortable.

To Soichiro's relief, a now eight-month-old Light was sitting on the counter playing with his stuffed fox he had as of a couple months ago started calling Ajal, and an orange for some reason. Once again, all the apples had vanished from the fruit basket.

"Good morning, Apple Demon," Soichiro muttered as he made some coffee, still unsure if this was a separate entity or Light simply had superpowers.

"Pomme," Light replied, pointing at the fruit basket, and all Soichiro could do was sigh.

"Light, when did you start learning French?" While this might be baby babble, it was around maybe two weeks after Apple Demon showed up that Light started figuring out words. And to top it all off, it was in both English and Japanese, which he would switch between. So for Light to now be learning French out of nowhere was not something Soichiro would be surprised by.

Light smiled innocently at him and stood up, stumbling a bit as he slipped on the feet of his onesie against the counter, and Soichiro managed to catch him before his face hit the hard surface. He held his baby close as Light giggled and grabbed at his face, and he felt his heart melt even more for the little boy in front of him.

Sachiko said that a demon was possessing Light, so this wasn't their son anymore. However, looking into his child's soft cinnamon eyes, Soichiro knew this infant in his arms truly was his son and not a supernatural being pretending. Even if Light was a bit of a troublemaker with these new powers, that didn't mean Soichiro loved his son any less.

Light grabbed his father's glasses off his face and tried to put them on, and they were so large compared to his head that Soichiro laughed, grabbing a bottle and some food out of the fridge to feed him. Unlike most babies, Light didn't seem to understand the concept of sleeping. He went to bed whenever he felt like it and woke up with or before the sun, but as long as he wasn't getting into trouble, there wasn't much issue. They had already tried babyproofing, and it hadn't worked, so the only thing saving them was the fact Light was smart enough to not get himself hurt by drinking cleaning products and such.

Sachiko probably wasn't going to be awake for a while, and she never enjoyed taking care of Light for long periods alone. Aizawa and Ide could babysit, but it was so early, and they had school in a couple hours. Soichiro looked down at Light, who was finishing off the milk,

"Light, I think we're going to try something new today."

"Why?"

"Because your mother is sleeping," this was risky, and the last thing he needed was Light's secret being revealed. But from what Aizawa had told him, Light didn't start floating as often when out, and if he did, it was easy to hide by using the baby carrier.

He put Light in the car seat and buckled him up, making sure to grab enough things to keep Light busy.

He carried the car seat out to the car and put it in the back, sighing. Well, his coworkers had wanted to meet Light one day, so this worked decently enough.

The drive was uneventful, and he checked from the mirror occasionally, seeing Light cheerful in the back playing with his toy and blanket until eventually, he fell asleep. *What do you know?* If he just needed to drive around to get Light to rest, he would do that gladly.

Sadly, it was only about five minutes between Light falling asleep and

arriving at work. He took Light out of the car seat and held him close, thanking any god out there that the boy remained sleeping.

"Good morning, Superintendant," Kitamura greeted as Soichiro walked past to get to his office, "You brought your son?"

"He was up early, and Sachiko doesn't like taking care of him." He placed Light in a plush chair in his office, and the baby's limbs splayed out as though trying to take up as much space on the seat as possible with his small body. "He's well behaved. Just a little active." He looked up, "I hope you don't mind, sir. He'll hopefully be napping most of the day."

"Not at all, just don't let it happen too often." Kitamura looked down at Light, "How old is he now?"

"Almost nine months old." He cleared his throat, "I should probably get as much work done as I can before he wakes up and starts wanting to explore."

He was left alone with Light and wondered how long the boy would remain sleeping. He noticed something wrap the blanket around Light and put his stuffed fox next to him.

Soichiro shook himself. He needed to get some work done, so he made some coffee quickly and checked his computer to make sure everything was for the moment. It was, and it was early enough that he sighed. He had been working here for nearly ten years, and being Superintendant was everything he could have asked for, right? He wasn't nearly as likely to get killed on the line of duty, so he would be there to raise his son.

And yet, he still feared that staying in his office organizing everyone, while the right thing to do, was overall somewhat useless.

Somewhat bored, he decided to look at a file from another case that was only recently assigned, so not much progress had been made yet. Soichiro held the folder in his hands, then turned around to see, to his horror, Light was very much awake and chugging his coffee.

"Light, no!" He snatched the coffee away in a panic. Coffee was bad for babies, right? How much had he had? Was he going to be sick?

Light didn't seem bothered by this or the new coffee stain on his onesie, reaching for the drink again, "Coffee, please."

"No, it's bad for you. Why do you even like this? You shouldn't like coffee until you're older." He put Light on the floor and put a laptop in front of him, "You can play with this or Ajal, I need to work, okay?" He sat down to look at this case file, and Light stood up, before floating over into his Dad's lap. Soichiro frantically closed the case file to not scar his son for life.

"What's that?" Light pointed at the file, and Soichiro sighed,

"It's a case file. Someone did something bad, and we need to learn who did it."

"Why?" Light blinked innocently at him, and then his expression changed slightly, and then he said something that made Soichiro's blood run cold, "Why not wait?"

"Wait?" He asked cautiously, wondering what exactly was giving Light his abilities. From what he had researched, it was either some sort of demon, but it may be a Shinigami. Sachiko didn't humor the idea of a Death God too much, but it brought Soichiro pause, but his moment of being stunned gave Light enough time to grab a photo out of the case file and examine it.

...

Ryuk looked over Light's shoulder, fascinated by how fast this little human learned. All it took was talking to him in different languages and answering questions or even just talking to himself while Light was listening, and the child learned.

Why would humans kill each other? All humans die, there and gone so fast that while Ryuk doubted he would ever forget this young kindred spirit, he knew he would forget countless other humans he had seen in the last few months. Why go through the trouble of getting rid of someone? It's not like humans could prolong their own lives that way, and it actually seemed to shorten them if this "death penalty" was what Ryuk had gathered it was. For a human to kill another was interesting, sure, but also seemed like a foolish venture.

With other humans he had given the Death Note to, they said it was for gain. Ryuk supposed he could see the appeal using the notebook, but by the means that humans did typically, it just seemed like too

much of a risk to be worth it.

The image Light was examining, and his father was trying to tear out of his hands. It was a picture of a dead body pressed against the wall with a knife in her stomach.

...

"Light, can I have that back, please?" Soichiro finally succeeded in getting it out of Light's hands, only for Light to want to back and pointing. "Light, you're too young to be seeing this."

Suddenly the photo flew out of his hands and back into Light's, and Light pointed at something behind this woman, showing his father, and Soichiro's eyes widened when he saw what looked like writing behind her, and the tip of her index finger had blood on it, as though...

"How did you..." when he took the photo this time, Light let go. It was hard to make out, but upon putting on his glasses, it seemed to be something along the lines of numbers or perhaps part of a name that had been written upside down.

An officer came in who Soichiro quickly identified as Raoki, "Good morning, Superintendant,"

"Good morning, Raoki. Have you made any progress on the robbery case?"

They talked for a couple moments before Soichiro noticed a distinct lack of his son in the room, and the door was open. He quickly wrapped things up and ran out the door,

"Light? Light, where did you go?" He called, "Light!" He was a baby! Sure, he was clearly far more intelligent than he had ever expected, but he couldn't be getting that far on his own unless he was flying.

*Oh no, what if he's flying and someone sees him? This was a mistake, he's going to get taken away and experimented on—this is all my fault, I'm the worst father ever!*

*Calm down, it's early enough that not many people are here right now.*

*Where would he go? He probably hasn't left the building. What would Light look for?*

Well, Light seemed to always enjoy being stimulated, whether by playing with toys and stacking blocks, messing with computer games, or sometimes watching television. Though he liked being alone unless someone was interesting to him, so maybe he had just been uncomfortable with the new person and left? Or he found the case entertaining and wanted to know more?

Alright, first thing's first was to check the kitchen since he might simply be hungry.

Thankfully, he did find Light in the kitchen, and it was nothing short of a miracle that there was nobody else in here because at the moment, Light was floating around the room, holding a donut, giggling as he ate it.

"Dada!" Light grinned, and Soichiro grabbed him since he was thankfully not hovering too high,

"What are you doing?" He asked affectionately, trying to hide the fear that still found itself present.

"Expl... Explo..." Light gestured around the room, and Soichiro rolled his eyes a bit, assuming that Light was trying to say he was exploring, and then a thought occurred to him as he looked back on the last few months.

While supernatural happenings were common, it happened a lot of times when Light wanted something, often to be let out of his room and have attention, or he was hungry. While Light was intelligent, he didn't seem to fully understand keeping his abilities a secret yet.

Assuming this wasn't the work of a separate entity, what if Light being bored caused his powers to act up? Meaning that to keep Light's secret, he needed to be constantly stimulated when he was awake until he was able to understand the importance of not revealing what he could do.

"Say, Light," he looked to the boy, "I want to try something with you, it's going to be fun, okay?"

"Okay, Dada."

Now all he had to do was keep Light out of trouble until it was time

for his lunch break, and he could stop at the store to get what he was planning to use. That wasn't going to be too difficult, right?

After a moment, he didn't even bother trying to delude himself into thinking this would be easy.

# Chapter 5

During what Light's father had called "lunch break," he had taken Light out of the building and to a store, and Ryuk gleefully followed along. While Light was a fascinating little thing, Ryuk was quickly learning that his sire was determined to give his offspring whatever he needed, and his attempts to help were exciting to learn about.

That said, Ryuk was still slightly bitter with Shuichi for that baby cage thing because every time he started to figure out the lock, his fingers slipped, and Light remained stuck in there.

They were in a peculiar store full of strange things that seemed to be interesting for children, and Soichiro walked towards the back, to Ryuk's surprise, into what appeared to be for older children where he grabbed a box labeled "quilt blocks" and a little booklet, and a book called "Where's Waldo."

Getting back to where he worked after grabbing some food, he sat on the floor with Light, who looked at the blocks curiously. "See, Light, the goal with this is to use the blocks to follow the patterns in this booklet, okay? And with this," he held up the other book, "You have to find this person in each image," he gestured to the cover, and Light blinked,

"Okie!" Light took the blocks and examined them and the image. Soichiro smiled and ruffled Light's fluffy hair before sitting down for work.

Ryuk sat down on the opposite side of Light and looked at the image supposed to be made out of these weird blocks. How was he possibly supposed to do that?

However, Light seemed to have gotten an idea and would put blocks on top of the paper as though comparing them before putting them in the peculiar tray.

This went on for a little bit as the miniature human worked to solve the puzzle. Every now and then, Soichiro would turn and look perplexed for a split second and write something down in a notebook before getting back to work.

"There you are, Ryuk."

Ryuk looked up in surprise, seeing Zellogi standing there, staring between the two humans, "Zellogi, what are you doing here?"

"We heard that you found yourself a new pet, and I wanted to check it out." Zellogi replied, looking towards Soichiro, "Soichiro Yagami? Interesting pick."

Ryuk laughed, and it was the fact there was zero reaction from the Superintendant that made Zellogi realize what was so different about this instance of the Death Note ending up in a human's hands as he looked towards Light,

"That tiny thing is the Death Note's owner?"

"Yup!" Ryuk gestured to Light, who was no longer playing with blocks and was now staring up at Ryuk curiously,

"Ryuk?" That was what made Soichiro turn and bend down to figure out what that meant, but Light was still fixated on Ryuk,

"Well," Ryuk corrected, "He's 267 days old, so he's not the official owner yet, but I found out that all that really means is he doesn't have to write names yet, and I can hold onto it."

Zellogi stared at Light, "What's so special about him?"

"He isn't scared of me," Ryuk smiled a bit, seeing Light giggling now that he and his Dad were working together on part of the block puzzle, which was clearly Soichiro's attempt to distract him from the supernatural. "And he's smart, so he's not boring."

There was silence between the two Shinigami for a moment as Zellogi looked down at Light, before scoffing, "Well, it was nice knowing you, Ryuk."

"And what do you mean by that?"

Zellogi only laughed in response, "Have fun, Ryuk," and then he took off, leaving Ryuk confused and somewhat annoyed, part of him wanting to chase after Zellogi and get an answer. He may be young compared to other Shinigami, but he wasn't some reckless child like the others thought he was. He knew the rules, and there wasn't one against having a baby as the human he was in charge of. It hadn't been done, but that didn't mean it was illegal.

Maybe Zellogi just meant that since Light had a long lifespan, that

Ryuk wasn't going to be around in the Shinigami Realm for a while.

Light and his Dad finished the first puzzle, and Light was laughing and clapping with glee. Ryuk knew that he wasn't going back to that barren wasteland any time soon.

OoOoO

Soichiro got home that night, and Sachiko was making dinner. She looked up at him, "I see you had him."

"Yes," he set the bag down and held Light, who was fast asleep with most of his tiny body fitting on his father's shoulder. Soichiro felt his heart melt a bit, hearing the small noises from the slumbering child. "I'm going to put Light to bed, and I'll tell you what I learned today."

"Sure," she didn't seem to be paying attention, and Soichiro sighed at her disregard for their child as grabbed a bottle and climbed the stairs, still holding Light and singing softly, as he noticed the movement was stirring Light awake again. Light didn't often drink from bottles anymore, but he did from time to time, usually when sleepy.

*"My Dearly Beloved*

*Be strong, I shall be there.*

*Always here beside you*

*So, keep your head held high.*

*The shadows of this world*

*Will try to steal you away into their arms.*

*But you belong in mine."*

Light finished the bottle and yawned as he fell asleep again, having been working hard today, which was something still shocking to Soichiro. Normally babies had an attention span of roughly fifteen minutes at this age, but Light had been working for closer to an hour before getting sidetracked by "Ryuk."

Aizawa had a theory that Ryuk, or Apple Demon, was completely

separate from Light and was just hanging around for an unknown reason. After everything that had been happening, either Light was like Matilda in that recently published English book of the same name, having telekinesis due to unused mental capacity. Or Ryuk was a different being hanging around. Honestly, Soichiro had no idea which of the two was better, but he had noticed today that Light had noticed Ryuk's existence while playing with challenging blocks, but he hadn't been floating around.

Was Ryuk an imaginary friend, and Light just had strange abilities, needing mental stimulation? Or was Ryuk real and to blame for the abnormal happenings?

Nevertheless, he found himself speaking to seemingly an empty room as he laid Light down and watched him try to take up as much space as possible in the crib. "Take care of him, Ryuk," and then he left, walking downstairs to have some time with his wife before Light woke up and decided to play at an hour no human being should be awake.

Sachiko had just finished serving dinner, "Did he cause any trouble."

"No," he sat down, "I actually think he just needs stimulation. He was already noticing things in cases that I hadn't, and he can recognize patterns fast. Maybe we should get him tested with Mensa International when he's older?"

"You seriously think all of this is him just being smart?" Sachiko snapped, "Did you just say you showed him a case file?"

"Not really, he took it from me."

"That just proves it! He's not normal, Soichiro!"

Soichiro glared at her for a moment before softening, knowing she was just confused and freaked out. He was too, and they just expressed it differently, "And what can we do about it besides give him a hand to hold? You want to get rid of it, but what if we can't, and this is just part of who he is? He's our son, Sachiko, we have to be there for him and make sure his secret stays under wraps."

Sachiko picked at her food, "I suppose you're right. Why can't he just go back to normal?"

"Nothing is that simple," he finished and washed his dish, "All we can do is make things up as we go and hope for the best."

# Chapter 6

Tonight was a very important night for Light—April 19th, 1991—as he was finally 780 days old. Ryuk heard the grandfather clock downstairs chimed midnight, and he looked down at the sleeping toddler in his bed, which was built for adults, dwarfing his already tiny form. Not that Ryuk minded this, because there was room for him to lay down too, and Light's books, which he left at the end of the bed, were not disturbed.

Light was trying his best to curl himself into a ball and had formed a nest around himself like a bird, except instead of sticks, it was blankets. So much space, and yet he was content with so little of it. Ryuk gently shook Light awake,

"Hey, Light, wake up," he nudged the child, who tried to push him away a bit before slowly opening cinnamon eyes and sitting up, doing a drowsy kitten impression as he looked to Ryuk, his hair a mess and he rubbed his eyes, yawning.

"What is it?"

"Today's an important day for you." He pulled out the Death Note he had been holding onto for Light for nearly two years now. But Ryuk paused before he handed the notebook to Light. Oh, right, there was that rule he couldn't *directly* hand the notebook to a child under six years old. That was no trouble, he had known it since the beginning and had long since found the loophole, but he couldn't let his excitement get him killed. He put the Death Note on the floor, bypassing the rule altogether as Light picked it up, examining the Death Note before moving to turn on the lamp and blinking a few times, "I've been holding onto this for you, and now that you're 780 days old, you can use it."

"Why 780?" Light asked as he read the rules aloud, "The human whose name is written in this note shall die. This note will not take effect unless the writer has the person's face in their mind when writing their name. Therefore, people sharing the same name will not be affected." He looked up to Ryuk, "Why kill when you can wait?"

Ryuk laughed, having known Light would have questions, "I have no idea why it's 780 days—I've always thought it was random. But the notebook can be used for many reasons, but it's your choice if you write in it more than once every 490 days."

"Why?"

"Because you need to write every 490 days—another probably random number—to maintain ownership so I can stay with you."

...

"Oh." Light stared at the notebook, thinking about what Ryuk had given him. Well, Ryuk had been taking care of him for so long, this must be a good thing, right?

Killing people. Dad fought against people who did that, those who didn't wait for the ones they disliked to run out of lifespan. Dad would be mad if he found out Light did that.

What he did know is he had to write at least one name every 490 days. He didn't want Ryuk to go. He could think about what to use this for later.

"Bundle up, I'll take you to find a name to write," Ryuk said, and Light looked down at the notebook. The concept of death was strange, so he knew he probably didn't understand the full weight of being okay with this. He knew that, so he focused on wanting Ryuk to stay, getting out of bed, and running over to the closet, using some of his books as a stool to reach the handle and grabbed some boots, a jacket, and a beanie.

Ryuk picked him up, and Light clung to him tight while also holding the notebook, "Where are we going?"

"The city," Ryuk took off from the balcony, and Light shivered as they flew higher into the air, the gentle breeze proving extra cold in the middle of the night. He shivered and looked down at the city below and how beautiful it was. He giggled, and soon as Ryuk sat him down on a building, he ran to the edge and looked at all the things his parents didn't let him see.

Then he looked at one of the large screens and saw names and faces being shown, of people condemned who had brutally harmed others. Light sat on the ledge, and Ryuk sat next to him,

"I don't understand why humans broadcast people like that. It's like

they're trying to make those like you and me kill them," Ryuk looked down at Light, who observed some crime scene photos being broadcast.

He held the pen and looked at the person. This was a bad person, someone Dad got rid of, so this wasn't wrong. This was okay. He wrote the name down quickly and noticed Ryuk was nowhere to be found.

"Ryuk?" He looked around, hugging himself anxiously, "Hello?"

He felt a hand on his shoulder, "Hey," Light yelped, then smiled when he saw Ryuk was here, a lollipop in his hand, which he gave to Light, "I got myself an apple. Figured you'd want something."

Light took the candy and started sucking on it, looking up at Ryuk, "Am I doing something bad?"

Ryuk shrugged, "That's for you to decide. I gave you that notebook to do whatever you want with. Oh, and you can't let anyone touch it, or they can see me."

Light looked down at the notebook, enjoying his candy as he thought. Ryuk nudged him a bit,

"Whatcha thinking?"

"Dad would say this is bad," Light mused, "But if all humans die like you've said, why do people care? You could wait, and using this just makes it faster. But does that mean Dad doesn't have to go after 'bad people'? It does mean that there isn't harm in me using it sometimes."

He looked up and blinked when Ryuk started cackling, "You sound kind of like a Shinigami, kid."

Light continued to think quietly and finish his candy. He couldn't ask Dad about this, because that would upset him. Maybe he could ask? He could ask about why people saw killing each other as bad and not just impatient. He certainly couldn't ask his mother about any of this.

*"What is wrong with that child?"* He remembered hearing his mother say many times even when he was just playing with his blocks. Did she not love him?

Maybe he could ask Aizawa or Ide? They didn't think he was creepy and were okay with answering his questions. But they didn't come over as much anymore since they worked with his Dad.

That meant he was alone with this secret, right? That was okay because Dad was aware of Ryuk at least on some level and seemed fine with him. And he had Ryuk.

Light shivered from the cold and nuzzled up closer to Ryuk, laughing when Ryuk wrapped a wing around him, and the feathers tickled him.

Ryuk looked down at him, "Wanna head home?"

"Yeah," Light yawned, "I'm sleepy."

Ryuk picked him up, cradling him as though he was still a baby and Light looked down at the world, which seemed so small from up here.

When they got home, Light looked around. First thing's first, he needed a place to hide the notebook, so nobody touched it. His first thought was his toy trunk, but anybody could look in there. The bookshelf wouldn't work because he would read with Dad on the nights he was home.

*Oh! Is Dad home tonight?* Light decided to lift his mattress a bit and stuff the notebook under there, running to his parents' bedroom and checking, seeing Dad wasn't in bed. So he looked downstairs, seeing Dad's shoes were at the door.

He looked around before he heard something from the bathroom, and he stood on his tiptoes to open the door, glad to not find it locked.

He saw his Dad sitting on the bathroom floor, hyperventilating and tearing at his hair, trying to stifle sobs.

"Dad?"

Dad jerked up but didn't seem able to calm himself. If anything, his breathing got even faster. Light ran over,

"Dad, what's wrong?" He hugged Dad's neck, feeling Dad wrapping his arms around him and holding on tight. "It's okay, Dad," he tried, "Shhh,"

...

Ryuk watched what was happening, taking notes in his human

observation journal. Already Light with the Death Note was fascinating, and he seemed to have developed something akin to a Shinigami's way of thinking regarding the morality of killing humans. Maybe that would change as he got older, but it was interesting to see the young child's thoughts on the matter now.

And now, it seemed, Light was seeing another of his sire's... panic attacks, that was what they were called, right? He had many of those, typically with only Ryuk around watching and unsure of what was happening. Only a handful of times had Light seen them, but he was smart enough to know they were not uncommon.

Light held onto his father and looked up at Ryuk, asking with his eyes for a little assistance. Ryuk shrugged and walked into the kitchen, getting a glass of water and holding onto it until Light needed it.

...

Light stayed in that long hug for a long time, helping Dad calm his breathing. *Why does Dad get so upset like this? Did I do something wrong?* He wondered if he could use the notebook to help Dad, so he wasn't so stressed, but decided that was for another time.

He waited patiently as Dad slowly managed to control his breathing until eventually, he let go, and Light took the glass of water from Ryuk and gave it to him.

Dad wiped his eyes and took the offered water, "Thank you, Light. What are you doing up?"

"I was thinking," Light answered, "What's wrong?"

"Nothing..." Dad tried, but Light cocked his head, making it clear he saw right through that, "I'm just stressed—nothing for you to worry about," he took a sip of the water, "What were you thinking about? And why are you in your jacket?"

"I was cold," Light omitted expertly, "And I was just thinking about things."

Dad smiled a bit, standing up and carrying him, "Come on, let's get you back to bed." He was still shaking and trying to control his

breathing, and Light hugged him again,

"But I'm not tired. Are you going to bed?"

"Not yet, Light. I can't sleep yet."

"Oh." They were now in Light's room, and he was helped out of his jacket and boots and tucked back into bed. "Can we read, Dad? I don't like that you're sad."

Dad softened and grabbed a book, "You know, I think spending some time with you is what I need tonight," he opened the book they were reading, to the chapter they last left off on, "I love you, Light."

Light clung to him, and saw Ryuk sitting on the bed too and ready to listen to the story, "I love you too, Dad."

# Chapter 7

Aizawa was let in by Soichiro, and with him was Ide. The Superintendent smiled tiredly, shaking his hand, "Thank you for coming over. I know it's a lot to ask, given you have a job now."

"It's no problem," Aizawa assured, "Light's a good kid, and I know it's better fewer people know his secret." He noticed Light was playing in the main room, building something, so busy with what he was doing that he hadn't noticed the door.

Ide crossed his arms, "We're happy to help take care of Light for the weekend, but what's going on?" Soichiro ran his hands through his already messy hair, which implied he had been doing this a lot if he had completely abandoned the idea of tidying himself before they arrived.

"Sachiko has been sick for the last couple weeks. I'm taking her to the doctor tomorrow, but tonight we are staying at a hotel. We'll be home tomorrow evening after we discuss what we learn."

"Shit. She's pregnant, isn't she?" Aizawa asked instinctively.

Soichiro shrugged a bit, "I don't know." He looked towards Light, "There is money on the counter for if you want to take him out for food or get him new parts for whatever he is building." He raised his voice a bit to get Light's attention, "Light, Aizawa and Ide are here."

Light looked up, brightening and running over, hugging Aizawa's legs and then Ide, jumping up and down.

"Hi!"

Ide picked Light up, bouncing him, "Hey kid, what have you been up to?"

"I'm building a computer," Light jumped down and ran over to the main room, pointing to his creation,

Aizawa observed the monitor Light was working on, which seemed to be about halfway done, and Sachiko came down the stairs and pointed to Light,

"Be good, Light, and no setting things on fire."

"Okay!" Light waved, "Bye, Mother!" She left without a word, and Aizawa looked down at the basket he had brought, seeing Apple Demon had eaten all the apples within while he hadn't been looking.

"You know, Apple Demon, those were for the whole weekend." He waved goodbye to the Superintendent, who looked exhausted as though this weekend would be anything but relaxing.

Light sat on the floor, before looking up at Aizawa, "Is Mother going to die?" Aizawa was almost alarmed by how detached this toddler sounded when he asked that question, but he should have stopped being surprised a long time ago. Light had always had an abnormal apathy at the idea of death. And yet he was also compassionate enough to care for others, so it wasn't any indication of a mental disorder they would have to worry about.

Of course, the number of people Light knew was not many since he spent most of his life hidden inside due to his abilities or the demon latched onto him. Perhaps he only showed care for those he gave a damn about, and the fact he had a strained relationship with Sachiko was no secret.

He found himself hesitantly asking, "Do you want your mother to die?"

"No," Light replied cheerfully, "It wouldn't change anything for me, but Dad thinks it would, and he's already too busy. I don't care one way or the other as long as I know." He blinked, "You didn't answer my question. Is it because you don't know?"

Deciding he didn't want to inquire as to why Light didn't care, he yawned, "I've got no idea, so before we do anything else, I need coffee. Your Dad has cold brew, right? The last thing I need is Apple Demon dumping hot coffee on me."

"Um..." Light got up from his project. "Dad made the mistake of showing me where he keeps the cakes. He also somehow made a bigger mistake by showing me where he keeps the brownies." He walked over to the pantry and floated up to the top shelf, getting down the treats and the cold brew coffee maker, handing it down.

Ide pulled out the cups from the cabinet as was routine while watching Light, "I'll make the coffee."

Light beamed as he floated to the counter, "Can I have coffee?"

"You're two," Aizawa pointed out absently.

Light crossed his arms, "Almost three."

Aizawa rolled his eyes and ruffled Light's hair, turning around and seeing Ide putting ice cream in the cup, "Hideki, what are you...?"

"What? Is this not how the professionals do it?" Ide poured the brew from the machine into a cup, playfully moving the cup up and down in a repeated motion, making Light giggle, "Welcome to our coffee shop, what can I get for you?" He said in imitation as Aizawa leaned against the counter, smiling fondly as he watched the delighted sparkle in Ide's eyes, "You know we've got spirits in here? Demons, ghouls, nobody knows anymore." He stared down at his creation, "Look, it might not taste good, but it will look great. What are we thinking? Ice cream floating on top of it, with a caramel drizzle?"

"At this point," Aizawa shook his head a little in amusement, "Just pour it in the cup, and I'll drink it."

Ide scoffed, rolling his eyes fondly, "You're no fun. Just turn around for a second, and I will present it to you."

"I wanna help!" Light bounded back over to the counter, laughing and having a good time, and Aizawa turned around to allow them to work in peace.

Only then did Aizawa notice something. He picked it up to examine and realized it was a drawing, unfinished for the most part, but it was of a creature Aizawa had never seen before. Was this what Light saw when referring to Apple Demon, Ryuk, or whatever the creature's name was?

He subtly looked back towards Light when he knew neither he nor Ide were looking. Light was eating one of the cakes and humming that same melody he often did during the night. He had asked Ide if that was something he had played in his spare time, but Ide denied the claim, leaving neither of them sure of the song's origin, which Light refused to tell. Whether he had been taught or came up with it himself, Aizawa didn't know.

Light wasn't a creepy kid, really, even if the circumstances of his life were beyond unusual. He was a bright kid who wanted to meet people and play, but every now and then, it was *really* clear that he wasn't a normal kid. No child should be able to ask if their mother is going to die with complete apathy.

If he didn't understand what death was like the average toddler,

Aizawa would be able to accept Light's apathy. But that wasn't the case. Light knew what death was. He had gotten his hands on crime scene photos, and no matter what he was looking at, he only ever seemed mildly disturbed at worst.

"Aizawa!" Light waved, "We're done," he and Ide showed their finished product, which was more ice cream than coffee at this point, but as he tried it, it was concerningly good.

Light was bouncing a bit and jumped down from the counter, running back over to his little machine, using his tools—and it was an actual toolkit to build his toys with—to finish his project, humming.

This was how most nights babysitting Light went. He would sit and read, build something, or play with Apple Demon. While that happened, Aizawa and Ide would either work on the cases they were part of or just watch a movie. It all depended on the nature of the investigation. While Light had seen crime scene photos before, a crossfire death and a downright planned murder with a mutilated body were two very different things.

Seeing as they were investigating what looked to be a serial killer, the choice was to turn on live TV and see what was on. He didn't recognize the movie, but he wasn't overly interested in that. He was more curious watching Light, who was managing to build a motherboard and was putting in a new device. He got up from the couch and sat down next to Light, "What's that?"

"The processor," he pointed to a book sitting out, and upon further investigation, it was teaching about computers, and he examined the fans.

"What are you building this for?"

"For Dad," Light explained, "I said it's for me, but I want to give it to him. He gets upset when he's at work too long, but says he needs to do things, so why not work at home?"

"Well, Light," Ide looked down too, "Your Dad works hard and needs to help organize other officers like Aizawa and me."

"He likes to help cases too," Light pointed out, muttering to himself about the memory card, and seeing it was sitting on his stuffed fox, where he took it, "Thanks, Ajal," he continued to hum softly. Aizawa was content to watch him, knowing that it was pointless to try tucking Light in for bed in an hour; he would fall asleep when he was tired.

After a little while of Light building the computer, Light got up and begun to clean up his work area, walking over to the pantry to get himself some leftover rice.

Light looked up from the microwave, "Can we go out for breakfast tomorrow?"

"Sure," Ide replied, "Where do you want to go?" Light shrugged,

"Anywhere. Mother doesn't let me go out often." He looked to where the news had turned on about a hostage situation. Aizawa tensed, and while he knew there were officers on duty who would be handling the situation, it was still unsettling that as an officer, he was seeing this happening and couldn't do anything.

...

Light saw the hostage situation in a bank and went upstairs, "I'm gonna get my blanket." He went upstairs, having memorized the name and face, and he pulled out the Death Note, deciding to write the name down and specifying the death was from being stabbed—a reasonable cause of death.

Over the last couple of months of having the Death Note, Light had decided what he would do about it. Every 490 days was required, but the only times he would kill before that number—thus resetting the number—would be if there was something he could do to save people like his Dad did every day.

Everyone would die eventually, but murderers, who only treated people like chess pieces, weren't good. It was the principal of the matter. If Light killed someone to save other people, that could be counted as defense, and from what his Dad had told him when he asked, that wouldn't get you punished. However, killing people for no reason or for your personal gain, like threatening to shoot a bunch of people if you don't get money, was not okay, and Light was right for doing something about it.

Of course, he couldn't do this a lot, or somebody was bound to catch on, so he would be careful and never use heart attacks.

Ryuk looked down at Light, "Are you protecting those people?" Light

nodded,

"Mhm!" he looked up to Ryuk, who played a more maternal role in his life than his human Mother did, "It's easy this way. If they're meant to die now, they still will, but this would give them a chance, right?"

Ryuk laughed, "Yeah, you're right, kid."

As Light stuffed the Death Note under his mattress and grabbed his blanket, he noticed a family picture on his bookshelf, and he wondered why Dad was taking Mother to the doctor. She had been throwing up a lot, so she must be sick. He had asked Ryuk if Mother was dying, but Ryuk replied that he couldn't say since it was against the rules.

He decided not to think about it and went back downstairs to see if Aizawa and Ide knew about that bad man dying. Judging by their shocked expressions, they had heard about it.

"What did I miss?" He asked, sitting back down with his rice, "Did the police capture that guy?"

"Yeah," Aizawa replied, and while he had a good poker face, it was still clearly a lie. But Light decided that was fine, and he went back to work.

OoOoO

Soichiro nervously opened the door to his home, trying to ease his own shaking as he looked to his wife, who had a hand still over her stomach, both of them shocked. They had been so careful, and he had been so busy and stressed that neither had thought this was possible.

How were they going to tell Light? What would Light think about this? And could they keep Light's abilities a secret if there was a new baby around who wouldn't understand why it was important that nobody knew?

He walked in the main room and saw Light was almost done with the computer he was building for himself. As long as Light was stimulated and they could afford it, he would get Light whatever he wanted to keep himself from being bored.

Aizawa looked up, waving, "Hey, Chief!" he and Ide came over, "Light was well behaved while you were gone."

"I'm glad," Soichiro muttered, and Ide cocked his head slightly,

"So, what's going on?"

Deciding to get it over with, Soichiro bent down to Light, who was hugging his legs and chanting, "Dad! Dad! Dad!" with glee.

"Hey, Light," he brought Light over to the couch as Sachiko shut the front door, "There's something Mom and I have to tell you." he sighed, "Your Mom's pregnant. In six or seven months, you're going to have a little brother or sister."

Light blinked before a bright smile found its way onto his face, giving Soichiro relief since he knew not all children were happy about this kind of thing.

Then Light's expression changed to curiosity, "Why can't we have the baby now? I want to meet my sister." Soichiro chuckled,

"It could be a boy, Light."

"No, thank you," Light replied, "Just a sister, please. Why can't my sister come now?"

"Because she needs to grow," Sachiko explained, "She's growing in my belly and will come out when she's ready."

"Did you eat her?" Light asked, "How did she get there?

*Oh... damn.*

Aizawa laughed and clapped Soichiro on the shoulder, "Well, this is where I say goodbye." He and Ide left, and Soichiro stood in a panic,

"Don't abandon me now!"

"Sorry, Chief!" Ide joined, "I'm not getting paid enough to help with that talk. Good night, and good luck." As much as he wanted to be annoyed, he also wanted to join them in the running for the hills at the thought of explaining where babies come from to his far-too-intelligent toddler who wouldn't put up with the stork lie.

Soichiro realized at that moment that his mother had been right all along. Clever children might sound fun, but it would really come back

to bite you.

Sachiko sighed, "I'm going to go upstairs." He already felt panic rising at the idea of having to explain this to Light alone, knowing that if he chickened out and didn't, Light would go find out somewhere else and who knew what horrors he could find in that can of worms.

He sucked in a breath, "Alright, Light, this is going to sound really uncomfortable. But I'll explain it to you."

After about ten minutes of explaining, he finally finished, and Light had a look of disgust on his face, "Ew. I don't like that."

"Just know, Light, if you have questions when you're older, you can come to me, and I won't judge you."

"I don't think that's needed, that stuff sounds gross!"

"Well, that's how babies are made," he sighed, "I was really hoping I wouldn't have to tell you until you were nine or ten."

"I wish I hadn't asked." He then looked up with a sad expression, "Dad?"

"Yes, Light?"

"Is Mother having another baby because she doesn't love me?" He looked at his feet and hugged Ajal, "I know you love me, and a sister sounds fun, but Mother always asks what's wrong with me."

He pulled Light into a hug without hesitation or thought, "Light, your mother and I both love you so much. She just doesn't know how to interact with you. We're not having a baby to replace you."

"But what if Mother forgets about me and gives all her love to the baby?"

He wasn't sure what disturbed him more. The fact that Light was afraid his mother would forget about him, or the dreadful realization that Light might be correct in his fears about not getting the maternal love he needed. Light shouldn't have to rely on a demon that may or may not exist to get maternal affection.

"I won't let her, okay?" He vowed, "And even if she were to, I'll give you all the love you could want."

"Make sure to save some for the baby too," Light reminded him,

earning a small chuckle, even though he knew deep down that this unplanned pregnancy was going to be the source of many sleepless nights. He would have to be careful to hide a panic attack if it happened since Light had caught him one too many times.

"Of course, I will." He stayed in that hug for a little while, before smiling, "Do you want to show me how the computer's going?"

His upset seemingly forgotten, Light bounced up, "Yeah!" He ran over to where he was getting the computer set up at the table and started showing and explaining progress that Soichiro only somewhat understood. However, he was more than happy to listen as his son gleefully went on about his project.

...

So a new addition to the Yagami family was on the way?

It had been fascinating to learn the nature of human procreation and how humans were created. Did that mean Light might one day have his own spawn?

Regardless, this meant there were going to be big changes in the household. Would Light share his secret with his new sibling? Part of Ryuk wondered if he should mess with this new baby too just to piss off Sachiko. Then he remembered there was a high chance the new kid would be terrified if it saw him or if it was being picked up for no reason.

Then again, if Sachiko really did choose to focus on the new kid and not Light, it might be worth it.

Ryuk instantly had to stop that line of thinking, wondering if this was what Zellogi had been referring to in that vague conversation two years ago. Could he get *that* involved with humans who hadn't touched the notebook? Messing with objects around the house was one thing, but to physically pick up a child who did not own and had not touched the Death Note...

Well, there wasn't a rule against it, technically, so there was no reason not to. Besides, he was supposed to be a bystander for the most part and just watch what Light did. Even if he had been taking more of a

parental role than he had ever expected, given the lack of affection Light got from his mother.

He decided that while killing Sachiko would be a step too far, messing with her even more than usual was absolutely in the cards if she tried to forget about Light.

He watched Light explaining computers to his Dad, who was unaware the gift was for him. Ryuk sometimes while Light slept, peeked into neighbor houses to see what other human children did, and none of them were like Light. They kicked and screamed over the tiniest thing and all sorts of actions that made no sense to the point he knew this wasn't just the fact Light had a Shinigami in his life.

Alright, so maybe his test about what a human would do if they grew up with the Death Note had been messed up since he picked a human who was so much like him, held no fear, and was intelligent far beyond his peers.

Not that he was complaining at all, he immensely enjoyed seeing Light grow up and learn, so he was perfectly happy to stay with the kid for his whole life.

# Chapter 8

Not for the first time in his young life and certainly not the last, Light found himself bored. It didn't happen often, but when it did, it left Light feeling desolate.

He splayed out on his bed, staring at the ceiling and listening to all the women talking downstairs. Mother told him that this was time for the Moms, and he had to take a nap. But he had just woken up from his nap when she told him to take one since he was used to the routine. Now he was awake and had read every book in his room except for the one he read with Dad at night.

What were the Moms doing downstairs? Mother had called it a "baby shower," and frankly, seeing as the baby was in her stomach, that seemed a little weird. He didn't understand how that worked, especially because it sounded like a party.

Ryuk looked down at Light, "Whatcha doing?"

"Thinking." He sat up, crossing his arms, "I want to do something helpful, but I can't be loud." He brightened as an idea came to him, running to the closet and putting on his jacket and shoes, sneaking into his parents' room away from the staircase and grabbed the library card, heading back to his room and opening the balcony door, "Can you help me down?" Ryuk helped him down, and Light grinned, "To the library!"

He had memorized the route there when his Dad took him since it was, oddly enough, only a block from the book store where he had been taken for his 3rd birthday four weeks ago.

The walk versus the drive was pretty long, and he found himself tired quickly and was glad very few people paid any mind to the child walking alone in the city.

At some point, Ryuk started carrying him subtly, close enough to the ground to give the illusion of walking.

Once he made it to the library, he walked up to the librarian, "Excuse me, where can I find books on taking care of babies?"

The librarian looked down at him, "The third aisle down. Do you need help finding the children's books?"

"No, thank you, I'm sure I can manage," he grinned, wandering into the library to find what he was looking for, needing stand on a stool to reach the books, browsing until he found one. It was in English, but he was fluent in many languages, thanks to having Ryuk around. Dad even said he was considering seeing if Light could test out of foreign language classes when he was older.

*"The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*, by Benjamin Spock." He opened the book and read the first few sentences to see if this was what he was looking for, "Trust yourself. You know more than you think you do. Your family is growing and changing. You want to be the best parent you can be, but it's not always clear what's best." He shut the book, "Perfect!"

He thought about it, realizing that he probably didn't need to be home for a few hours. Mother wouldn't miss him, and Dad probably wouldn't be home until late. Besides, if he waited until the sun went down, Ryuk could fly him home.

He decided to sit at one of the tables where there was just another boy and read the book to learn what he had to do. It wasn't like Mother knew how to take care of a child, so if Dad was busy, it was up to Light to take care of his new sister—Mother had looked at him weird again when they learned from the doctor that Light had been right about the baby being a girl, and Light meanwhile was happy to be correct.

He noticed the boy near him was upset and taking notes on the book he was reading. He was a skinny young boy, probably around nine or ten, with a mop of messy black hair and pale brown eyes, revealed only for moments at a time. Light leaned forward, "Whatcha learning?"

The boy looked up, puzzled to see a kid so young asking that question, "Oh, just some informal coordinates. I have to get my grade in math up."

"Oh! Can I see it?" He extended his hand, "I'm Light! Light Yagami!"

"Touta," the boy replied, "Touta Matsuda." Light moved his chair over and looked at the book,

"I saw these in a book," he pointed to the graph, "The line going from side to side is the x-axis, and the one going up and down is the y-axis."

"I know that," Matsuda smiled a bit, "But I keep forgetting how to use

that to plot the right points. They're really easy to mix up." He looked to Light, "How old are you?"

"Three. Why?"

Matsuda laughed a bit, "Then how do you know these kinds of things?"

"I get bored, and Dad gets me books. Ry—" he hesitated, "Mom teaches me to read when he's busy." Ryuk laughed,

"I'm your Mom now?" Well... Ryuk was more of his Mom than Mother was, so Light decided he liked that.

"Huh," Matsuda seemed impressed, "I have never met a three-year-old who knew how to do this because he was bored." He looked over to the book Light was reading, "Whatcha reading?"

"It's a book on taking care of babies. My sister is going to be born soon, and I want to help."

"Oh," Matsuda frowned a bit, "So do you want to be study-buddies? I have a sister too, so I can give you some tips."

"Yay!"

They talked and worked for hours, and Matsuda managed to get the hang of plotting the points, and Light learned a lot in the book as he went to check it out, hearing the library was closing soon.

"Thanks for the help, Light," Matsuda said as they were walking out, and then he paused, "Wait, where are your parents?"

"Um... Dad's at work and Mother probably doesn't even know I left. Or if she did, she doesn't care."

"But—But you've been at the library with me for hours!"

"Mother was throwing a baby shower. I walked here."

"Oh, Jesus Christ," Matsuda was quiet for a moment as though thinking of what to do, before suddenly picking Light up in a piggyback ride, "It's dark. I'm not letting you walk on your own. You might be smart, but you could still get kidnapped or hit by a car. What's closer? Your Dad's work, or your house."

"Dad's work. He's the Superintendant of the NPA."

"Hold on—your Dad is Soichiro Yagami?! I've heard about him!"

Light giggled, clinging to Matsuda's neck with one arm and holding his book with the other, "Yeah. I walk there all the time, so I'll be let in."

"Shouldn't your Dad be more concerned that you walk there?"

"He is, and he always tells me it's dangerous. But it's okay. I'll be safe." He could always fly, and if it really came down to it, Ryuk would protect him, right? Even if, for some reason, Ryuk couldn't, he kept a piece of the Death Note hidden at his hip, held by the elastic at the top of his underwear. He could take care of himself.

"Just try to be more careful, Light." Matsuda started walking, "I walk past the NPA building on my way to the apartment."

As Matsuda walked, he bounced Light a bit to readjust his grip. Light held on tight, still keeping a firm hold on his book. "Touta, what's school like? Mother worries I'm not going to fit in. Do you think kids will like me?"

"Of course they will. Your Mom probably just means that you're different because you're really smart, but that isn't a bad thing."

"I don't care what humans think," Ryuk mused, "Why do humans care so much about 'social norm' or whatever? You all breathe the same air, and you all die. It's not like how you behave changes the fact it'll happen eventually."

"Yeah," Light said in response to both Matsuda and Ryuk, "But Mother's friends say that I should have friends my age. Right now, my friends are my babysitters, Mom, Dad, my toys, and characters in books. I'm hoping my sister will be my friend too."

"I've always been a bit of an idiot," Matsuda joked, "So I don't know exactly what you're going through, being smarter than everyone, though I get why you wouldn't connect with others your age. But I guess I'm closer to your age, and I'm your friend." Light beamed,

"Really?"

"Yeah, you're a fun kid."

When they got to the front door of the NPA building, Light waved, and while there were some questioning looks at Matsuda, nobody paid

much heed, because the only time someone came with Light into the NPA building was to deliver him to the Superintendant. Though usually, this person was Aizawa or Ide.

Light jumped down from Matsuda's back and took his hand, leading him along, "Come on, come on, come on!" He opened the door to his Dad's office, "Hi, Dad! I made a friend!"

Dad looked up from his work, getting up and shaking Matsuda's hand, "It's nice to meet you." Matsuda bowed,

"I'm Touta Matsuda, sir," he looked up with a sparkle in his eyes, "I met Light at the library."

"The library?" Dad frowned a bit towards Light, before sighing, "Thank you for bringing him here safely. My shift ended a few minutes ago, and I was just finishing up the last of the paperwork. I can drive you home."

"Oh—Thank you, Yagami-San."

They all headed to the car, and Ryuk followed behind. Matsuda answered any questions he was asked about, namely where exactly to go, and what grade he was in. Normal things.

As Matsuda got out of the car in front of his apartment complex, he waved to Light, "Bye, Light! Maybe we can meet at the library again sometime!" He ran inside, and as soon as he was gone, Dad turned to him,

"Light, I thought we talked about going out on your own."

"But I have Ryuk," Light reminded him, "I'm safe as long as I have Ryuk."

"That's not the point, Light. Did you even tell your mother where you were going?"

Light huffed a bit, crossing his arms in his car seat, "Do you really think she noticed I was gone?"

"Where's this coming from? You're not usually like this, Light."

"She thinks I'm a monster," Light replied simply, and Dad tensed,

"She said that to you?"

"No, but you know it's true."

Dad sighed as he drove home, "I know I can't stop you from going out, but can you at least tell your mother where you're going and be back before sundown?"

"She didn't want me downstairs, so I went to the library and got a book," he held up the book, "Can Mother please read it? You say she loves me, but she's not doing a good job."

"I'll talk to her." He turned to Light when they were at a stoplight, "Give her one more chance, okay? Maybe she'll be able to take better care of you when your sister is born."

Light looked down at his feet, "Okay. I'll do it for you, Dad."

"Thank you, Light."

They got home, and Light was surprised to find Mother outside, her hair messed up, walking through the street, shouting his name. Dad helped him out of his car seat,

"Sachiko, he's right here," he gestured to Light, "He went to the library, and a nice boy brought him back to the office."

"Light!" She ran over to him and hugged him, "I was so worried, baby!"

Hold on, what? Since when did Mother actually care about him? Had he thought she was the bad guy too fast?

He heard the sound of the last of the women at the baby shower leaving now that they knew Light was safe and sound, and Mother carried him inside while Ryuk watched curiously. Light yawned, showing the book he checked out,

"I got a book!"

Mother smiled, "That's nice, baby."

"It's for you to share with me," he offered it to her, "For child care."

"And," Dad stopped any argument that could come, "Light, let's eat dinner, and then it's your bedtime."

The dinner was silent except for the occasional polite asking how the others' day was, and Light could tell they needed to talk about

something but didn't want him around. So he finished quickly and used the stool to get up to the sink and rinse his dish,

"I'll get ready for bed while you two talk," he headed upstairs, "Are we gonna read tonight?"

"Sure, Light," Dad smiled, but it was tense, and Light headed to the bathroom to brush his teeth before getting in his pajamas.

"Ryuk, why was Mother worried about me? She's not normally worried." He removed the piece of Death Note paper from his hip and hid it inside his winter boots, which were in the corner where nobody would disturb them.

Ryuk shrugged, "Humans change their minds about things all the time. You really gonna give her another chance?"

"Maybe," Light reasoned, "Dad wants to fix things, and he already has enough to worry about with the baby coming soon." He lately had started sitting at the stairs with a glass of water ready, waiting for Dad to come home whenever he was late to make sure he didn't have another panic attack since they had been becoming more frequent lately. "Maybe I'm too young to understand."

...

He really shouldn't have been surprised. Light was so young, but also so brilliant, able to understand topics those far older than him struggle with. Still, it was alarming to see a three-year-old disregarding his mother.

But she had been worried about him, so clearly she cared about their son, at least a little. Sachiko had a hand on her growing abdomen, looking at the book Light had checked out, "He got a book to learn to take care of his sister?" She had a saddened look, "And for me."

"Sachiko," he put a hand on hers, "He thinks you see him as a monster, and he doesn't want to try anymore."

"And when someone finds out about his secret who shouldn't have and he gets taken away?" She looked up at him, "I just want him to be normal, and care for him without knowing that one day we could lose

him forever."

"That won't happen. Light's smart."

"And yet he flew to the library, Soichiro!" She shrieked, "He was in his bedroom, and then he was at the library, who knows who could have seen him!"

"That's what this is about? Not the supposed possession?"

"Don't get me wrong," she sighed, "Our child is possessed, and we both know it, but I guess Aizawa made a good point that it seems that this is a separate entity staying with Light, and not having taken over Light's body."

"Please, Sachiko," he pulled her close, "I know it's hard. I worry every day that somebody will find out, but you know that Light probably actually did walk. He's not going to get caught, and I'll make sure of it, even if I have to use my influence in the NPA to do it. I talked him into giving you another chance, please just try to take care of him, Sachiko."

She laughed a bit, "You're always trying to fix everything."

"I'd rather not come home to the house in flames," he joked a bit, "And if we're lucky, the teenage years won't be a nightmare."

There was one thing, though, that had bothered him for months, and he wasn't brave enough to ask. Had they really not been trying for a baby? A dark part of his mind wondered if she had been lying about taking the pill, to try being a normal mother, and didn't tell him. He brushed that thought away, because he shouldn't doubt his wife like that, and she knew him well enough to know that if she had said they should try, he would have agreed. Right?

None of that mattered anymore—they had one more shot at a happy family. If it ended in failure, he had done everything he could, but wouldn't ask Light to give any more chances.

He kissed Sachiko's forehead, "Get some sleep, love. I'll tuck Light in." She nodded, and they both headed upstairs, going their separate ways, and seeing Light's door was open just a crack, and the boy in question was sprawled out on his bed, baby blanket in one hand and his stuffed fox in the other.

No matter how many times he saw this, Soichiro's heart melted all

over again, tucking Light in properly, "Good night, Light,"

Light opened his eyes just a crack, "I can't wait for the baby to come. We're gonna be best friends, right, Dad?"

"Of course." He pulled the comforter up to Light's chin, "You're going to be the best big brother in the world." He hummed quietly, that melody Light was always humming while he read or worked on his projects. He was still perfecting the computer for himself, and Light had mentioned his goal was to be done before his sister was born.

He noticed a strand of Light's hair was brushed out of his face by an invisible force, and Light whispered, "Night, Mom," and Soichiro paused for a moment, before deciding to roll with it and getting up once he saw Light's breathing even out.

...

Mom? Light was calling him Mom now?

Ryuk stared down at the sleeping human, wondering how to feel about this new information. Obviously, he was not the young one's Mother, so why was he calling him that? Was it just pointing out than an actual God of Death who was still struggling to understand human concepts was doing a better job of taking care of the kid than Sachiko?

Regardless, the title made him feel a strange desire to protect the child. That sensation had been building up a lot in the last almost three years, but something about being called Mom really made it stronger.

Who was he kidding? This kid was still going to die unless there was some deal for immortality that Ryuk didn't know about. He was a Shinigami. Why did he feel protective over a human he had known from the beginning wouldn't be around forever—barely any time at all by a Death God's standards, seeing as he was nine hundred and still considered a child by many of the others.

Well, humans knew they were going to die, and they just made the best of the time they had, so Ryuk figured he could do the same since he had been planning to stay with Light his whole life anyway. It was at this moment that he decided that if Light considered him Mom, that

was fine. Either way, it was interesting, and that was what he had come here for.

# Chapter 9

Light felt himself being woken up from his sleep to a gentle nudging. He yawned, still tired, and went to go back to sleep, but then he heard Dad's somewhat panicked voice, "Light,"

He turned over a bed, untangling his blanket off his head and blinking drowsily, "Wha...? What time is it?"

"1am. Your little sister decided to come a couple days early, so I'm going to take your Mother to the hospital. Aizawa will be here in about half an hour to watch you, okay?"

"Okay," he shooed Dad away, "Go help Mother. I'm going back to sleep."

"I'm not leaving now," Dad replied, "You're too young to be on your own."

"I have Mom," Light replied, "And sleep."

Dad laughed, "You're an amazing kid, Light." He kissed Light's forehead, "Go back to sleep. Hopefully, you'll be able to meet your sister when you wake up."

"Yay," Light smiled sleepily before curling up into a ball and trying to get warm again, far too cold from being woken up before he was ready. He wasn't going to tell Dad that he had been out late buying a doll and reading more about babies. He would be more excited when he had more sleep, but it wasn't like he would be allowed to go to the hospital with them, so he might as well be well-rested.

He felt Ryuk curl up closer to him, and Light nuzzled against the Shinigami's chest as he went back to sleep.

OoOoO

Light woke up to the sun in his eyes, and he blinked away, taking a moment to remember the events of last night, and he noticed Ryuk was no longer curled up next to him but was standing by the window,

"I checked on your parents while you were asleep since Shuichi's here. Your Mother's fine, and your sister is healthy. Her name's Sayu."

Light's face lit up with glee. Sayu! She was here! He knew his parents had been debating between a couple names, and now she had a name!

He threw on some pants, not bothering to change out of his pajama shirt, and ran downstairs, "Aizawa!" He noticed Aizawa asleep on the couch and shook him, "Wake up! Wake up! Wake up! We gotta go meet Sayu!"

Aizawa grumbled for a moment as he slowly woke up, sitting up and rubbing his eyes, looking to the clock, "I don't think visiting hours have even started yet."

"They have! They start at 7, and it's 7:15! Come on, let's go!"

"Okay, okay," Aizawa blinked a few more times before being fully awake, "How about I make you some breakfast, and you tidy yourself up a bit. First impressions are important, and hospital food isn't great."

"Okay!" Light ran back upstairs, changing out of his shirt, "Ryuk, what do you wear to meet a baby? Something fancy? Or do you have to wear something soft?"

"I have no idea," Ryuk replied, "I mean, I was holding you in this," he gestured to himself, "So I don't think it matters."

"Thanks!" He just changed into a simple red shirt and then started tidying up his hair a bit and running back downstairs to see Aizawa making an omelet and mumbling about how it was too early for this. "Don't you get up for work earlier than this?"

"Doesn't mean it's not too early," he put the food on a plate, "Eat up." He grabbed an apple from the bowl and threw it at the wall a couple feet away from Light, and it vanished in midair as Ryuk ate it, and Aizawa smirked a bit but said nothing.

"Do you think I should tell Sayu about Ryuk?" Light asked, and Aizawa shrugged,

"I don't know. It all depends, but normally that kind of thing would be chalked up to a child's imagination. Only time will tell." Aizawa paused, "Why exactly can only you see Ryuk?"

"It's—" Light caught himself, "I don't know. Just that it's complicated,

and I'll get it when I'm older." He was about halfway done with his food now, "Ai, what if Sayu doesn't like me? Mother's only started liking me since Dad asked her to."

"Don't worry about it," Aizawa assured him, "Even if you two have different interests, I'm sure you'll be close. You're a good kid, Light. Finish eating, go brush your teeth, and let's go."

"All done!" Once again, Light ran upstairs, brushed his teeth, grabbed the doll for Sayu using money he had gotten from chores, and helping around the house, "Let's go!"

"Where'd you get the doll?"

"Bought it last night since I read about when babies will be coming soon."

"Nobody saw Ryuk carrying you?"

"Nope! We were careful."

"Good." He stopped in his tracks, "Crap, I don't have a booster seat." He sighed, "It's pointless to try stopping you, so..." he grabbed two pillows off the couch and put them in his car like a seat, "You get to sit on pillows."

"Is that safe?"

"I don't know, but it's certainly less of a risk than you flying there."

"I'm not stupid, Aizawa."

"Doesn't mean you won't be reckless."

Light crossed his arms and pouted, before deciding to look out the window and count how many motorcycles he spotted on the way there. It passed the time while driving, and he thought about what he could do with Sayu. She was too little to really play, and she was supposed to sleep a lot.

They got to the hospital, and Light got distracted mere seconds after getting to the receptionist, looking around and seeing what there was to see, noticing other people and balloons. Aizawa caught up with him quickly,

"Don't wander off on me." Light held Aizawa's hand, so he didn't get lost and led along into the room, where he saw his tired parents

smiling down at a blanket.

"Hi!" He ran over and climbed onto the bed, gasping quietly when he saw Sayu for the first time. She seemed to be sleeping, with just her head peeking out of the blanket. Mother giggled a bit,

"Light, lower your voice, Sayu's trying to sleep."

"Sorry," he whispered, "Hi, Sayu!" He put the doll he got for her on top of the blanket she was wrapped in, "Here you go, Sayu." It was a fabric doll with a pink outfit and brown pigtails. It wasn't much, but it was what he could afford, so he got it for her.

"That's very sweet, Light," Dad beamed, deciding not to question where the toy had come from. Mother nudged Light a little bit to get his attention,

"Would you like to hold her?" Light nodded eagerly, and Mother put Sayu in his lap, "Remember to support her head."

Aizawa looked on at the happy family, "Are you good with him, or should I stay?"

"I can handle him," Dad replied, nodding to Aizawa, "Thank you for watching him." Aizawa bowed and then left, waving goodbye to Light, who waved back and then focused on Sayu.

"Hi, Sayu," he grinned, "I'm Light, your big brother." Sayu made small noises and yawned, opening her eyes slightly,

"I think she recognizes your voice," Dad said, and Light thought back to all those nights he would talk to her when she had been in Mother's stomach.

Ryuk looked down at the baby girl, before laughing and lifting her about an inch off of Light's lap, making Dad's eyes widen, and Mother tensed visibly. Light just laughed, "It's okay, Ryuk's just messing around." Mother sighed whether with nerves or relief, Light didn't know, nor did he care honestly, excited to tell Matsuda all about Sayu!

...

Soichiro watched as Light held Sayu with the utmost care and talked

about what he wanted to do with her when she got older. He couldn't have asked for a better son than the one he had.

It had taken a bit, but Sachiko was getting better about being comfortable around Light. It was getting easier once it was made very clear by Light that Ryuk was a separate entity altogether. But at the same time, it was much more unnerving because did that mean they would need to keep this secret with two children? Or would it be fine because this Ryuk being wouldn't risk the kids getting found out? Would Sayu be able to see Ryuk, or just Light?

He decided to push these questions to the side. They could be pondered about or answered another time. What mattered right now was his family and the newest addition.

It had been one hell of a ride to get to this point, but as he watched Light play with Sayu's toes that had escaped her blanket when she started moving, he found that ride had been more than worth it.

# Chapter 10

Light laid on his stomach on the play mat, having a staring contest with a slightly over one-year-old Sayu. The last year had been pretty uneventful, and the main thing Light had learned was that sleep was underrated. Sayu was so sweet but loved to scream in the middle of the night.

Sayu giggled and grabbed Light's nose, "Brother," he beamed as she rolled over and sat up, just like he had taught her months ago.

Dad was at work, and Mother was taking a nap upstairs since she had been tired lately. Light got up, hearing his stomach growling, and headed to the fridge, Sayu toddling after him.

He looked to see what there was and noticed they were out of apple sauce, which was Sayu's favorite treat—making her Ryuk-approved.

Ryuk looked over Light's shoulder, "Looks like we're out of a lot."

"Yeah..." he pondered his options. Mother may have been getting better in the last year, but...

*"Mother, we're out of snacks."*

*"Not now, Light. Ask your Dad when he gets home."*

He shuddered at the memories of being a toddler, looking down at his little sister, blissfully ignorant. She didn't know anything about Ryuk yet, or if she did, she didn't ask or understand.

He had some chore money, but it was late at night when he typically went to the store. However, Dad had asked him to stop doing that since the crime rate had gone up by 20% this year, and while he could bolt with Ryuk, that wouldn't be recommended.

That meant he would need to go out during the day. He checked outside and estimated he had about an hour until sunset. He brightened as he got an idea. He had read how to make apple sauce from scratch in a book, and Ryuk needed more apples anyway. There was an apple orchard not far from Matsuda's apartment he had been taken to. If he made good time, he could be there and back before it got dark.

He bent down to Sayu, "I'm going to go out for a bit, okay, Imouto?"

"Why?"

"We're out of apples, and I'm going to get some." He hugged her, "I'll be back before Dad gets home. Mother should be up soon." He grabbed his backpack off the coatrack alongside his jacket, and he smiled when Sayu chased after him,

"Brother!" She tried to follow him, and Light stopped her,

"You're too little to come out. How about you go wake Mother up? Or..." he went back in the house and turned on *Aladdin,* which was Sayu's favorite movie, and they got it on a VHS tape for her. Within moments she was sucked into the film, and Light wished he could stay because watching her dancing along to the music and sometimes falling over in her excitement, only to laugh and get back up to do it all again, was one of the joys in his life.

He pulled out the map Matsuda had given him, and Ryuk looked over his shoulder to examine it took, "Doesn't seem very far."

"Probably about an hour walk since I'm small," Light muttered, looking up at the clouds, and finished putting his coat on as the chilly October air got to him. "But if we take this back route that I found, you and I might be able to fly, but to reach it, we have to be careful and walk a couple blocks." He adjusted the piece of the Death Note in a secret pocket he had stitched into his rainboots. "And we're headed to an orchard, so you can eat as many apples as you want as long as you keep hidden."

With that, they began the quest to the apple orchard. Light looked to the sky, feeling a raindrop while being carried by Ryuk about halfway through their journey by air. Once they arrived, he was only slightly wet, glad he had packed an umbrella, pulling it out and searching for apples.

Ryuk darted off into the nearest tree but kept close to Light, peeking out of the tree to make sure Light was still safe as he analyzed a tree to determine if he could climb it. The rain wasn't too bad, so if he was careful, he should be able to get a firm grip since he had a jump rope he could use.

Mother questioned why he had so many supplies in his backpack, but as Matsuda had said and Dad agreed, you could never be too prepared.

He used the jump rope and hooked it around the tree's trunk, giving

him the ability to climb up easier and swing onto a branch that could support his weight. He turned, opening a second, more open, compartment of his backpack and put as many apples in as possible.

He felt the exact moment he made an awful mistake when he moved to another branch and heard a snapping sound underneath him. Everything felt like it was going in slow motion as he collided with a branch below as the one he was standing on broke under his feet, and he ended up landing on his back, his backpack discarded next to him.

He couldn't breathe, frantically trying to get any air in as pain in increasing amounts came from both his chest and especially his left arm.

...

Ryuk had heard it before he saw it, that panicked yelp from Light, the rustling of a tree, and then a loud 'thud!'

He regretted turning around for a second because what he saw when he located Light actually terrified him for a moment. If it weren't for the lifespan he could still see permitted a long time left, he would have mistaken the child for dead.

"Light!" He flew over, and eyes widened when he saw the sleeve of Light's jacket was cut by a particularly pointy part of a branch, and blood was coming out, and Light had his eyes wide in terror, trying to get air in. What was going on?! Why couldn't he breathe? Was this a normal human thing? He wasn't dying, so what was happening?

Having no idea what to do, he just tried to sit Light up because he wasn't moving aside from the occasional twitching of his chest. Thankfully it only took a few seconds before Light's breathing slowly went back to normal. But then it changed to crying.

"Ma—Mom," Light began to cry harder, looking down at his arm, which was still covered by torn fabric,

"Kid, what's going on?" Ryuk asked with a little more panic than was hopefully called for, and Light got up on shaky legs and tried to grab his backpack up off the ground, but the second he tried to lift with his bloody arm, he shrieked in pain and pulled the limb to his chest,

squeezing his eyes shut and shaking his head.

"I—I think," Light whispered, "I need help."

Not wanting to wait for any humans to find the crying and injured child alone in the orchard, Ryuk didn't hesitate to scoop Light up with his backpack and take off into the sky, high enough that Light could be mistaken for a bird. But he knew that as a young human, Light couldn't stay up here for long.

Where could he go? Going to Soichiro could work, but to actually get to him ran the risk of Light needing to carry himself through the building and to his father. Aizawa and Ide were probably at work, and that left home and...

It was risky, but Ryuk considered Light's older friend and then dove down to Matsuda's apartment, looking around to make sure nobody was walking by and knocking on Matsuda's window.

The boy got up from his bed, and his eyes widened when he saw Light hovering at the fourth-floor window. His eyes were wide, but then he opened the window, seeing the obvious pain on Light's face, "Come in, come in," he helped Light inside and then looked below the window, where there were, sure enough, no ledges. "Light, were you just—were you just flying?! And what happened here?!"

Light smiled meekly, forcing a small laugh, "I fell out of a tree."

"You fell out of a tree?" Matsuda asked with an incredulous expression, "And you were just flying?" He looked around the room and then slowly tried to help Light out of his jacket, "You're lucky my sister's at her friend's place and Mom's getting groceries. I—I'll get some ice." He hurried off, and Ryuk finished helping Light out of his jacket, and Light looked to him with fear,

"We can't let people know the secret, Ryuk!"

"You're also bleeding and," he blinked, "Your arm is changing colors." Why was it doing that?!

...

*This is bad. This is bad.*

Dad had told him so many times that nobody could know the secret! Even Sayu couldn't know yet! And what would Matsuda do? He wanted to trust his friend, but he did know Matsuda was excitable and what if he said something by accident—

He looked down and saw his arm was swelling a lot, and there were messy scratches on his forearm. He tried not to think about the pain and found the terror of someone knowing his secret kept him occupied.

Matsuda came back with an ice pack, a towel, and a hoodie, "Okay! Let's look at—oh, that's broken. Can you move your fingers?"

"A bit ago I could," he tried again but found he couldn't, only bringing himself more pain, and he fought back a sob. Matsuda just brushed back a strand of his messy black hair and then wrapped the ice pack in a towel and put it under Light's arm, and then used the hoodie to keep it in place,

"I'm going to call your Dad."

"Maybe I should," Light muttered, "Can you hand me the phone?" His breathing picked up a bit as he thought about his poor Dad. What if this caused another panic attack—or what if this caused a heart attack?! He read that those could happen from stress while figuring out when the Death Note's default could be safely used on criminals.

Matsuda handed him the phone, and Light called Dad, glad that Dad did have Matsuda's number for when they hung out, "Hey, Dad..."

*"Light? I thought you were at home. Does your mother know you're out?"*

"She was napping, and Sayu's watching a movie," he sucked in a breath, whimpering in pain as he shifted his arm, "I went out to the orchard since we were out of apples and..." here it comes, "I broke my arm, and Ryuk brought me to Matsuda's window on the fourth floor."

Silence on the other end of the line, and Light bit his lip, sighing in relief when he finally heard Dad's voice, *"I'll be there in five minutes. Make sure Matsuda keeps the secret, but I think he's trustworthy. Make sure to keep your arm still."*

"Okay. Love you, Dad." He hung up, "Dad will be here in five minutes."

Matsuda nodded a bit, and then he brightened, "You can fly?!"

"No," Light replied, "I have a friend named Ryuk that only I can see. He carries me. But people who see it do think I have powers..." he smiled sheepishly, looking to Ryuk, who was watching what was happening with great interest, "Matsuda, you can't tell anyone."

Matsuda blinked for a moment, "That's obvious, right?"

"Huh?"

He got up and dug through his bookshelf, showing off comic books, "It's a rule of thumb for the best friend of anyone tied to the supernatural to never reveal the secret! It only causes disaster!"

"Best friend?" Light brightened, and Matsuda nodded,

"Yeah, you're kind of my only friend. I'm not popular." Deciding not to think much of that, Light hugged Matsuda with his good arm, and then they both heard a fast knocking at the door, and Dad was let in, rushing over to Light's side, stopping in his tracks when he saw the makeshift cast, and then examining it,

"Where exactly does it hurt, Light?"

"From the elbow down," Light replied, "Matsuda's keeping the secret!" Dad turned to Matsuda, who nodded confirmation, and Dad shook his hand,

"Welcome to the inner circle, and thank you for taking care of my son. Now," he picked Light up with one arm, "I'm taking you to the hospital, Light. Your mother and Sayu will meet us there."

"I want to go to the hospital too!" Matsuda pleaded, "I don't want to just leave my friend!"

Dad hesitated for a moment before gesturing for Matsuda to come along, "I'll call your father and let him know you're with me."

"Oh, my parents don't care," Matsuda replied, "I'm home alone all the time, and as long as I'm back before 10pm, they don't care where I am."

"I'm still calling your parents," Dad replied, heading out, and Matsuda followed, and as they all got in the car, Light asked,

"Dad, are you okay?"

Dad was quiet for a moment before processing the real question: *"Are you going to have a hard time tonight?"*

"I am relieved that Matsuda will be keeping the secret. That gets some stress off my shoulders. I'll be fine, Light."

Light knew he couldn't let Dad out of his sight tonight, just in case.

Matsuda adjusted the hoodie tied to Light's arm, "Is that any better?"

"Yeah. Thanks."

"You're good at tying those," Dad muttered, and Matsuda beamed,

"Thank you, sir! I've been practicing. I like helping people."

"I'm glad," Dad replied, a genuine smile on his face, "I'm glad Light met you."

OoOoO

The hospital trip was dull for Light. It was exciting seeing new things, but all the doctors and nurses talked down to him as though he didn't understand a word of what they were saying, and all Light wanted was for them to please just give him the x-ray and something to deal with this pain. And when he expressed his desires, they just said he was a smart boy and gave him a lollipop.

When they finally gave him the x-ray, he had apparently broken the shaft of his ulna badly enough that it came up on the scans immediately. The doctor said that while it wasn't a completely clean break, it would heal just fine, but he couldn't climb any trees for a while.

As soon as his cast was put on, a bright red color, Matsuda was the first to sign it, writing his name in big letters of TOUTA. Ryuk signed it too, curious about why humans did this, but this was done in the car since they were going to head for dinner with Mother and Sayu.

Matsuda watched the sharpie move seemingly of its own accord, "So Ryuk's in the car right now?"

"Kind of," Light replied, "He's only in here enough that the fact its

moving doesn't bother him, but he's actually on the floor and phasing through it."

"Cool! So how long has he been with you?"

"Since I was..." Light tried to remember, "Dad?"

"Four months old. It's been over four years."

"Does anyone else know?"

"Only my babysitters," Light replied, "So that's six people now. Sayu doesn't know yet."

The car stopped, and Dad turned, "We're here." They all got out of the car, and Dad turned to Matsuda, "Your mother said we can drop you off after dinner."

"Thank you for bringing me, sir," Matsuda replied, and Light quickly noticed Mother and Sayu in the restaurant and waved, grateful for the Advil he had been given at the hospital.

But of course, he knew exactly what Dad was doing, trying to goad him into asking if Matsuda could spend the night. He was trying to keep Light from being able to check on him at 2am. He examined Dad and saw that his breathing was calm, and none of the normal tells were present, but if he knew one thing, it was that his father could be one hell of an actor when he wanted to be.

He did want Matsuda to stay over, but asking right now seemed a little strange since after dinner had already been specified, and there were always other times.

The apples were still in his backpack, which was safely in the car, and Light couldn't help but wonder if they were actually there or if Ryuk had eaten them already. Oh well.

"What happened?!" Mother asked, looking at his arm, and Light shrugged a bit,

"I went to get apples and fell out of a tree," she blinked, and he gestured to Matsuda, "He knows, and he's keeping the secret."

Matsuda looked to Light, "Why didn't you just go to the store or ask your parents?"

Tense silence from the table, everyone knowing the reason but not

wanting to say it. Matsuda shrunk down,

"Sorry, was I not supposed to ask that?"

"It's fine," Light replied, thinking of just the lie to ease Matsuda's worries, "I get bored easily, and kind of do what I want. Mother and Dad have long-since given up on stopping me as long as I don't go out after dark until the crime rate goes back down. But it's kind of awkward to admit."

"Oh." Matsuda laughed a bit, "Looking back on when we met, that makes sense."

They all ended up talking for a while and eating dinner. Sayu was happy to color and show Light her drawings of flowers, and he gave her the sharpie, and she drew some on his cast. Flowers were the first thing she had figured out how to draw, and she loved doing it.

Dinner went well, with everyone making pleasant conversation and Matsuda learning as much as he could about what had been going on for the last four years, fascinated by it.

After dropping Matsuda off back home, Dad looked to Light, "He's a good friend to you."

"Are you mad he found out?"

"No," Dad replied, "It could have been worse, and I suspected he would keep the secret, but we still have to be careful. There are bad people in this world, Light. But I prefer that he had found out, and you were cared for instead of you walking home with your arm broken. How is your arm feeling?"

"Kind of numb," Light replied, "Still sore."

"Right. Light, do you really still not trust your mother to even ask about buying food? You said she's gotten better."

"I don't know," Light replied, looking down at his legs and leaning against Ryuk, who was forcing himself into the car, "Every time I try to ask for anything, I keep expecting to be dismissed. I said I'd give her another chance, not that I'd trust her."

"Light..." Dad sighed, "I know you're a remarkable child, but you don't have to keep trying to take matters into your own hands. Sometimes it's good to rely on your parents."

"But who takes care of the parents then?"

"That's not normally how it works," Dad replied, "I know your life will never be what others would call normal, but you're four, Light. Maybe when you get into school, you can try to let go a bit. You still have a whole life ahead of you. Don't waste it by worrying about us."

"And let Sayu be abandoned the second she's not 'normal'? Or you to be alone and suffering in silence because you're overworked but determined to help everyone?" Light asked, "Why can't we just kill the criminals, so nobody commits crimes anymore? Then you can be home." Sure, with the computer that Light had built, Dad was home more, but still not nearly enough because he had to be at work in person a lot of the time.

"That's not how this works, Light. We can't just kill criminals unless it's specifically the Death Penalty."

"Certainly would save us some trouble," Light muttered, and Ryuk looked down at Light,

"Are you thinking about the notebook?"

Light nodded subtly, looking out the window, knowing he wasn't experienced enough with the world to create such a place where nobody would commit crimes anymore.

He barely noticed them get home, and Dad took him out of the booster seat while Ryuk brought in the backpack, "Come on, you've had a busy day. Let's go to bed." Light clung to him, and Dad softened a bit, sighing, "You don't have to worry, Light. I'm fine. You should never have had to worry about this."

"I don't like it when you're upset," Light replied, "Someone has to help."

"My little hero," he sat down with Light, "I'm positive that you're going to change the world, Light."

"I hope so," Light replied, and that brought a broad grin to Ryuk's face,

"Changing the world sounds interesting." Of course, Light figured, doing that with the Death Note was too risky if just getting rid of the criminals wasn't allowed. It just didn't make sense to Light. Murders were impatient because they didn't just wait for someone to die, but if bad people were already locked up and were going to be in there for a

long time, why not kill them?

He couldn't wait to start school because he could start learning about the world and what was wrong with it, making people impatient and wanted to hurt others. If he found that out, it was a good place to start. Data collection was always a good place to start. Maybe he could become a police officer like Dad? Or maybe become someone who could change laws.

He heard the soft snoring from Dad and noticed he had fallen asleep midway through the chapter they had been reading. Light went to move but struggled, so Ryuk moved the book to the nightstand and pulled the blankets, so father and son were underneath them.

Light yawned, deciding to get some sleep before the pain killers wore off, "Goodnight, Dad. Goodnight, Mom."

Ryuk brushed back Light's hair, "Goodnight, Light."

# Chapter 11

Since Sayu was born, Light's days had begun to follow a routine of the sort, since he and Ryuk needed to be more careful with the secret until she was old enough to understand its importance. It was extremely boring, only having some variety in his daily activities, but Light found ways to make do even with his broken arm.

But after some debate and reading books on philosophy and human nature—which led to a lot of reading dictionaries to learn new words—Light realized that having her know from a young age would actually be beneficial.

Typically, Mother watched him throughout the day and would keep an eye on him to make sure he didn't try to tell Sayu. But today was different because Dad was changing his hours for the day, and Mother was hanging out with Matsuda's Mom for the day.

The reason was that tonight was Light's first sleepover, having Matsuda over. So Dad had changed his hours today to be home at a reasonable time, and it had been timed on one of Aizawa's days off. Ide was still working, but one of his two normal babysitters who knew his secret and didn't really care about it coming over meant Light had more freedom than he did with Mother.

Aizawa was working downstairs on a case, and Light knew from what he had glimpsed that it was a serious case. He may only be almost five, but he did know how to take care of himself, and Sayu was already bathed, changed, and fed, so all that needed to happen was to keep her entertained.

So Light was sitting in Sayu's room with one of her crowns on his head, enjoying one of her tea parties with her toys and Ryuk, as she brought them treats that had been secretly brought upstairs or plastic ones from her toy kitchen off to the side.

He ate one of the brownies, leaning in, "Hey, Sayu, do you wanna know a secret?"

"What?"

"Check this out," Light looked to Ryuk, and they had agreed to run with the narrative that he just had superpowers when around Sayu. He flicked his wrist a bit, and Ryuk picked Sayu up. She yelped and

kicked her legs in confusion, and Light made the gesture for Ryuk to put her down.

Sayu spun around in a circle, almost spinning herself off balance, and he had to have Ryuk catch her. Upon realizing nobody she could see had picked her up, she began jumping up and down, "Again! Again! Again!"

Ryuk laughed and picked her up again, and followed around Light's gestures as Sayu whopped and shrieked with delight at "flying" around the room, the fairy wings on her back almost real in her young mind.

They both turned when Aizawa suddenly came in, "What's going— Oh." He groaned a bit and looked down at Light, "Is she doing that on her own, or are you or Apple Demon responsible? Do I need to worry about more flying children and another Apple Demon?"

"No," Light replied, and Aizawa nodded a bit, shrugging,

"Well then, I'd say carry on, but it's time for Sayu's nap."

Sayu crossed her arms, pouting, "No!" She pointed at Light, "Magic!"

Light looked up to Aizawa, "Five more minutes?"

"Fine. Five more minutes." But he didn't leave, watching as the two siblings played, and he leaned down and stole one of the brownies, "This is mine now."

"Hey!" Light laughed, and Aizawa rolled his eyes,

"I'm the one who let you eat those. Therefore I have rights to one." He took a bite, "But seriously, your parents need to stop buying these. Every time Ide and I babysit, they end up eaten by either you, or us when you are asleep, and it's becoming a problem."

Sayu poked Light's cheek, "Magic! Magic!" Light grinned and flicked his wrist, and Ryuk picked up one of the toy plates, spinning it on his claw, and Aizawa sat down and watched the display, which made Sayu clap.

"Alright, now it's time for a nap." He said in a no-nonsense tone, "Light will be able to show you more magic after your nap, but you won't be able to have fun if you're tired." He helped her out of her dress and into her pajamas.

Sometimes Light wondered how Aizawa did it. He just had a way with young children, which Light had noticed didn't apply with himself and Sayu, but other kids around the area they came across.

Sayu would normally cry and protest against her nap if it was Mother or Dad asking, but something about Aizawa just worked, and after being given an extra five minutes and being tucked in for a nap, she was ready to sleep.

As Light followed Aizawa out of Sayu's room, he considered his questions that he was too nervous to ask Dad. But would Aizawa answer them?

He supposed that he would have to ease into it for some of his questions, "So what case are you working on?"

"A murder. Pretty simple stabbing, but the body was found long after death, making identification difficult, so we're trying to narrow down who exactly the victim would be." He groaned, "Between you and me, kid, it's not as exciting as it sounds. I know your Dad probably wants to make police work seem exciting, but most of it is just endless paperwork. Sometimes, you can tell by looking at a case that the paperwork outweighs anything fun."

"So, do you get time at home with your fiancé?"

"Not as much as she or I would hope," he sat down at the case files and words in a notepad, which Light noticed was written notes about possible John Doe figures the victim could be. Normally, he may be inclined to look more into it, but he wanted to ask his questions.

"What would the punishment be for when the culprit is caught?"

"It depends on the circumstances. If this is someone who has killed others or a particular motive like a kidnapping for ransom that we aren't yet aware of, then it's the death penalty. Otherwise, it's probably life imprisonment."

"Why not just kill all criminals?" He dared ask, "Why do we execute some and not others? Wouldn't that make people not commit crimes anymore?"

Aizawa chuckled a bit, "You have asked me some weird things over the years, so I shouldn't be surprised you're asking. Let me guess: you're too nervous to ask your Dad?"

Light nodded, "I don't know what he thinks about the death penalty at all."

"Your Dad has a more traditional sense of it, that the rules are there for a reason, and you only execute the worst of the worst. Admittedly, you have a point in specific circumstances, and I am sure plenty of people agree with you, but nothing is that simple, Light."

"What do you think about the death penalty?"

Aizawa hesitated for a moment, picking Light up and resting him in his lap, "Listen, my beliefs are a bit of an outlier from the rest of the police force. But personally, I think the whole system is unreliable."

Unreliable? That wasn't something he had ever heard before. "Why?"

"Do you know how the police find out if a suspect is guilty?" When Light shook his head, Aizawa explained, "It varies, but the methods can include long-term confinement, persistent questioning, even bordering on torture. Now, tell me, if you were in that situation and there was one thing that would make the pain stop, would you do it?"

"Oh..." Light bowed his head, "Innocent people confess just to make the pain go away."

"Exactly." Aizawa straightened a bit, "Your Dad has always stayed away from those methods. It's part of what made him so popular, being able to collect enough evidence that such tactics weren't used. That's what Ide and I strive to do, to make sure we get the right culprit and don't need to use those strategies. But just because three cops use a different method doesn't mean other officers don't arrest innocent people. It's actually considered abnormal to be against the less humane methods."

Light tensed, grateful now that he had asked those questions, "But surely people know confessions like that shouldn't count!"

"In America, yeah, but here the confession counts no matter the means it was obtained." He shrugged a bit, "Besides, that's not the only reason why executing all criminals doesn't work. After all, there are reasons why crimes are committed, such as self-defense or feeling like there is no other option."

"No other option?"

"Let me give you an example from one of my earlier cases." He paused,

as though realizing he was talking to a young child, and this wasn't something a kid should know. But then he made up his mind, "It was a murder, but the victim was killed in revenge. The victim was abusive and drove the culprit's relative to suicide. There has been a debate, and many people think the culprit was right to do what he did, and the victim deserved it. What do you think about that, Light? Do you think the culprit deserves the death penalty?"

"No...." Light's brow furrowed, "Does stuff like that happen a lot?"

"Not that one specifically, but there are reasons for some murders. The world isn't black and white. And it's not even just murder. What about a man who steals because he can't afford to feed his family?"

"You're right..." he pondered it, "But for murders, it's impatient to kill them. Everyone dies eventually."

"That is a good point, and why even if there is a reason unless it's self-defense, the person will go to prison."

"But... if everyone will die eventually, why not just get it over with instead of wasting their lives locked up on a sentence they won't live to see the end of."

Aizawa sighed, "I don't have all the answers, Light. That's a debate about morality, and people on Death Row are still locked up for months or years before execution."

"That seems unnecessary," Ryuk muttered, and Light looked up to him.

"Agreed." He turned to Aizawa to clarify, "It's unnecessary."

"Yeah." He looked down at Light's brace, which he had since he had gotten the cast off, but still needed support, "When are you getting that off?"

"I need it for a little while," Light looked at the black brace, removing the velcro and looking at his arm and the scars littering it from having hit the branches. The scars were supposed to fade given a little time, and he hoped they would before he went to school next year because he didn't want to explain how he got them. "But I can take it off occasionally if I'm careful."

"Well, that's a relief." Aizawa went to put the case file away, but Light reached for it, and Ryuk put it back on the table. Aizawa rolled his eyes, "You better not tell your Dad I let you look at this."

"I won't! Promise!" He put on his best smile, "Please?"

It didn't take much convincing before Aizawa huffed, crossing his arms, "Fine."

OoOoO

The knock at the door made Light jump up from the couch where he was playing with Sayu. Dad wasn't happy at first about Light revealing his secret, but when he explained his thinking that nobody would think it was anything more than a child's imagination. When she got older, she would inevitably think any "magic" was just a trick, helped by the fact Light was playing with magic tricks. When she was able to keep the secret, they could tell her the truth.

And if he told Sayu the truth on the same day that he was having a sleepover with Matsuda so Dad could calm Mother down before she went to scream at him, nobody had to know.

He ran to the door and opened it, hugging Matsuda, "Matsuda!"

Matsuda picked him up, beaming, "I missed you!" Light noticed Matsuda had his backpack, and he grinned to Mother and Matsuda's Mom. It had been a debate if sleepovers were an option due to the age gap, but it was decidedly okay since Light behaved like someone much older.

"Have fun, you two," Matsuda's Mom said and turned to Mother, "I'll pick him up at 10am tomorrow?"

"Okay!" Matsuda ran upstairs with Light, "Bye, Mom!" They hurried up to Light's room, and Matsuda rolled his eyes, "She'll be here around noon. I hope your parents don't mind tardiness."

"But I thought she just said 10am...?"

Matsuda shrugged, "Not a lot of people have me over because she's always late. One time she didn't pick me up at all after working on a school project, and I had to stay the night unplanned." He dug into his bag, pulling out some apples, "I brought apples for Ryuk!"

Ryuk beamed and lunged for them, taking the apples and devouring

them, having been deprived since Light couldn't go out, and the only apples they had around was what Aizawa and Ide brought, or the occasional time Mother bought some.

Light giggled, "Thanks. I haven't been able to go out much."

"Understandable," he pulled out the disk for *Final Fantasy V,* "You have a game console in here, right?"

"Yeah!" It had been a gift for being a good big brother to Sayu for a year, and he was excited to play new games. He and Ryuk had played all the Mario games multiple times, but it was nice to have a refreshing change.

Ryuk was sitting on the bed, watching as the game loaded up, "What's this?" Light spun around to him,

"It's a new game!" He examined the controllers, "How do you play?"

"I'll show you, or the tutorial will."

There was a knock, and Dad came in with some popcorn, "I thought you two would want a snack."

"Thank you, Yagami-San." Matsuda bowed a bit from where he sat, and Dad smiled affectionately at the boy. He looked to Light,

"Try not to stay up too late."

"Okay, Dad!"

Sayu came charging in and flung herself at Light, "Magic! Do the magic!"

Dad picked her up, "You brought that on yourself, Light," he picked Sayu up, "Not right now, Princess. Light's playing with a friend."

"But I wanna see the magic!"

"You can see the magic tomorrow." Dad headed out of the room, still carrying Sayu under his arm, which was the only way to carry her without her escaping. "If you two get hungry, there are some leftovers, and any treats Aizawa didn't either eat or let you eat—we really need to stop buying those."

When Dad left, Matsuda smirked a bit, "So did you get any stories from your babysitters about when you were little?"

"Yeah!" Light tried to remember them, "Aizawa never took any of it too seriously, but there was an incident with a meatloaf coming to life..."

Ryuk burst out laughing, "Ah yes, one of my many attempts to scare Shuichi, ending in failure."

"There was also the making breakfast in the equivalent of zero-G..." Light counted on his fingers, "And I kept crawling into the vents."

"Oh, right!" Ryuk cackled, "You never cried much as a baby, but the day you couldn't fall into the vent anymore, you cried for six hours straight, and Aizawa was celebrating not having to worry about that anymore. Your parents came back to both him and Ide drinking from having to listen to you for hours. Your parents were disturbed by the teens drinking in their living room until they got the context and had to listen to you screaming for an hour."

Light blinked at Ryuk and then turned to Matsuda, "Apparently, I lost it when I couldn't fit in the vent anymore and drove my underage babysitters to drink."

"Wow." Matsuda started laughing, "You know, I wish I had a demon friend to hang out with and have adventures with."

"Ryuk's kind of like my Mom," Light admitted and slumped a bit, "Mother's still worried about fitting in at school. She's better, but I know she still thinks I'm not normal enough to go to school."

"Well..." Matsuda bit his fist for a moment as he thought, "I can probably give you some tips about surviving school. But Light, fitting in isn't necessarily a good thing."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, most kids your age can't even read yet," he gestured around the room and the books and some textbooks for high school that Light was determined to teach himself, even if he was struggling. There were also a few anatomy books since he was curious about how the body worked. "You don't think like other kids, so why pretend you do?"

"Mother says that kids are mean to people who don't fit in."

"True," he pulled Light close, "But if kids are mean to you, that means they're jealous. Besides, you're the son of a great cop and the Superintendent of the NPA, so why would anyone risk hurting you?

Pretending to be something you're not will only hurt you in the long run."

"I guess you're right," he hugged himself a bit, "But I'm probably not going to have many friends, am I?"

"It doesn't matter how many friends you have. What matters is how good of friends they are. Between you and me, I honestly think school is just going to be boring for you."

"Oh no," Ryuk moaned, "Boring?! I was hoping school would be something exciting with how much Sachiko's stressing about your social success in it!"

Light giggled, "Ryuk's already complaining about it." Matsuda did it best to look in the general area of where he guessed Ryuk was, used to the idea of only Light being able to see him,

"Welcome to being one of the people forced to go, Ryuk." He hummed a but, "I wonder if skipping grades is possible?"

"Dad already checked. It's not." Light grumbled, "It is in America, but I don't want to leave home."

"Bummer," Matsuda shrugged, taking a handful of the popcorn, "Well, come on, you've still got a year to escape school. We don't need to worry about that yet. Should we play the game?"

Deciding to relax and follow Matsuda's advice, Light grabbed the controller, "Yeah!"

# Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Anxiety.

Perhaps it was abnormal for a six-year-old to feel that in the presence of other kids his age for the first day of school—something normal and even celebrated in society—but for Light, this was the first time in his life that he was around so many children.

Ryuk seemed perfectly amused, but Light was quick to abandon Mother and hide in a corner between the wall and a bookshelf and pull out *Ender's Game* to read and hope the people would go away soon. He pulled out his two notebooks to translate it into Japanese and French to make sure he kept sharp on his language.

"Light, what are you doing?" Mother asked when she finally found him, "We're supposed to be taking pictures."

"Do I have to?" Light asked, "I'm just getting to the good part! And..." he looked to the other kids and then to Ryuk, who was sitting with him.

Mother grabbed his hand, "Come on, Light, I don't ever ask much of you. Please just be normal and come take the photos."

"But... you ask me to do a lot of things like clean the house," he started counting on his fingers, "Take care of Sayu, make sure Dad has time to relax, maybe make small dinner—"

"You don't pay the bills."

"Doesn't Dad do that?"

Mother glared, "That's just normal responsibilities all children have to do, just like all children take pictures on their first day of school."

Ryuk snorted, "I don't think all children have a Shinigami as a more competent parent." He grabbed Light's waist and pulled him back a bit, his feet just barely off the ground. Mother huffed, knowing that she wasn't going to win, or Light would take off. But he found himself terrified for when they got home and behind closed doors.

So much pressure had been put on him for three years to be perfect and fit in like other kids, but even the idea of being around so many people wasn't pleasant.

"Fine," she growled a bit, holding his hand and pulling him along, "Let's go meet one of your teachers then."

Light hastily packed up his bag and followed her, Ryuk tagging along, and he ended up in the room of his new math teacher, and the name on the board said Ms. Abiko. He waved sheepishly, "Hi."

"Hello," she bent down to him, "You're one of the first graders, right?"

"Yeah," he relaxed, much more comfortable talking to an adult, "Can I ask a question?"

"Of course you can. What is it?"

He grinned, "I've been working with the quadratic formula, and I wanted to make sure, since part of the equation is -b, that means if b was a negative number, the two would cancel out and become a positive, right?"

Ms. Abiko stared at him with complete shock for a couple of seconds as though she could not process what she was hearing, "That... That's right."

"Thank you!" Maybe school wouldn't be too bad if he could stick close to the teachers.

Of course, from the books he had read and advice from Matsuda, he shouldn't give off the impression of being a teacher's pet. It wasn't about fitting in and more that kids actively hated the teacher's pet, and it could end in him getting bullied. Because of this, he couldn't sit in the front row.

The back row in any class would imply he was one of the rowdy kids who didn't listen, and that wasn't what he wanted if he hoped to be closer to the teachers, so he decided a seat in the middle would suit his needs best.

He took a deep breath. He could do this. This wasn't going to be too bad.

OoOoO

Of his two children, Soichiro never expected that he would end up talking to the principal about Light. On the first week, no less! How was that even possible?!

He knew it was irrational, but when he got the call that he and his wife should come to talk to the principal, his first thought was that Light somehow revealed his secret. Light was a careful kid, so that probably didn't happen, but then he remembered when Light was a baby and whenever he got bored, supernatural occurrences would begin happening.

"What's going on?" He asked, and noticed Sachiko was here too and not happy. "Is something wrong?"

Mr. Suzuki shook his head, "Nothing is wrong, please, have a seat." He obeyed, and the principal smiled a bit, "I promise you, your son hasn't done anything wrong. His teachers say he's very shy, but he is very bright."

"So what's this about?" Sachiko asked, and Mr. Suzuki seemed almost amused,

"Well, it actually seems Light's teachers have agreed he is a little too smart. Fluently bilingual, an understanding of the world around him, phenomenal arithmetic skills, your son is easily one of the most gifted students I have seen."

"So, what's the issue?" Soichiro asked hesitantly.

"I wanted to propose something to you for your son's education," Mr. Suzuki said, "It's not common, but have you considered having him participate in online education? He can't skip grades, but with his advanced level, his teachers and I agree he would be able to breeze through all of elementary school this school year."

"We considered that," Soichiro said, "But we thought it would be best for him to interact with kids his own age."

"Have you considered extracurricular activities like sports? According to his language teacher, he seems more content to keep to himself and seems afraid of other kids because of his intelligence. Of course, I am not his parent; I am just suggesting from what I have heard about your

son, some options to ensure he can learn to the best of his ability."

Soichiro chuckled a bit, "I wouldn't have thought such a suggestion would happen so fast."

"Your son was the first thing the staff talked about at the end of each school day. It's not every day you find a kid like that."

"I see," he sighed in relief, grateful Light's secret was still intact, and he had made a positive impression on his teachers, "We'll talk with Light about it and get back to you on Monday. Is that alright?"

"Of course," he stood up, shaking both Soichiro and Sachiko's hands, "Thank you for coming in."

"My pleasure," he headed out with Sachiko, hands in his pockets, "I'll say that went well."

Sachiko was not so thrilled, "I told you we should have had him around more kids his age. You heard what the principal said, that Light is shy. You and I both know he's not shy!"

"Yes, well, he's only ever been around Sayu and people who are older than him, for the sake of his secret."

"Exactly! No child should have his best friends being a young teenager and two grown men!" Soichiro shook his head, knowing Sachiko had a point, but where was Light even supposed to find kids his age? He met Matsuda by chance after wandering to the library, and no surprise instances like that had happened again.

"Maybe getting him into sports where there is already a start of conversation will help him. I do understand where he's coming from, being nervous about other kids. I'm sure when he gets older, he'll be more comfortable."

"I suppose you're right," she grumbled, "But he's supposed to be comfortable with people and able to balance a school and social life. All he does is read and learn or play video games with whatever demon sticks with him. That's not normal, Soichiro. I'm worried about him."

He actually laughed a bit, "I gave up on Light being normal when he started asking about the answer to life, the universe, and everything. I told him the answer was 42, but I doubt he was satisfied." He shrugged, "Look on the bright side. His ability to learn at his own pace

means his secret is less likely to come out, and sports mean he will be even further distracted. I'll talk to him about it to see what he wants."

When he got home, he saw Light playing with Sayu, and he was glad that his instinct that Light could take care of his sister for the mere half-hour they were gone worked out well since he hadn't been able to call Aizawa or Ide on such short notice.

"What did the principal say?" Light asked worriedly as he put down the doll he was holding, "Am I in trouble?"

"Not at all," he assured him, "Come on, Light, I do want to talk to you about what we learned." He brought Light upstairs into his room, rolling his eyes when he saw the clutter on Light's desk. He had had one since he was little, but as a gift for the first day of school, he had gotten a new one, and already it was covered in books and notebooks. He still could not figure out where Light's love of notebooks came from. Still, if it helped Light not be bored, he decided it wasn't any of his business, figuring he just liked having different ones for various purposes and wanted to keep each separate.

"What is it?" Light asked, sitting down, and Soichiro sat down with him,

"Your principal was telling us that you are a very gifted kid, and all of your teachers agree. However—"

"Am I too quiet?" He asked meekly, "I just—"

"Light," he put his hand on Light's leg, "You didn't do anything wrong. Your teachers were just saying you already know everything you're supposed to for this year, and it was suggested you learn online. We haven't gone through the details, but if you are interested, we can transfer you online, so you can get through your classes faster if you want to."

"I like that," Light mumbled, and Soichiro added on,

"But if we are going to do that, we have to make a compromise, okay?" Light looked up in intrigue, "You need to pick one activity that will let you meet other kids your age. Preferably a sport, but as long as you pick one, I don't care what you do. You don't have to decide right now, but—"

"How about fencing?" Light asked, "I've always been interested in that."

"Alright then, I'll look for something." He went to get up but then noticed Light was shaking, "What's wrong, son?"

"Is Mother going to be mad because I'm not normal?"

Was this ever going to stop? It was always this debate between Sachiko and Light about being normal.

"It's not about being normal. Your mother just wants you to be able to blend in but still shine enough that your life will be as easy as possible, and having Ryuk around," he noticed Light was floating now, as though he was sitting in his demon companion's lap. "That makes having a normal life impossible. It's not a bad thing. It just means life will not be as straightforward."

"Fitting in isn't always good," Light echoed what Matsuda had said, "I just don't want her to be mad at me."

"She won't be," he then grinned a bit, "Hey, how about we prove her wrong. You'll do your best and still be able to be happy, even without being 'normal.' Don't ever be ashamed of who you are, Light. We just have to adapt and overcome, that's all."

"Thank you, Dad," Light moved, still hovering, and hugged Soichiro's neck, "Yeah! I can do it!"

"That's my boy." They broke apart, and both laughed, "I still can't believe it took you a week to get your mother and I in the principal's office. Honestly, I would have expected it to be Sayu."

Light giggled, and Sayu came running in, jumped at Light, knocking him onto the bed and into his nest of blankets, "Light!"

Soichiro smiled at his two children, grateful they were getting along, and headed downstairs for dinner.

OoOoO

Light absently played *Super Mario World* with Ryuk. It was long past midnight, and he knew he should really be in bed, but his mind was in hyperdrive as he considered the realization that he had failed to even seem to belong in 1st grade.

Sure, it was dreadfully boring doing something he had already known how to do since he was a toddler. And the idea of talking to other children who looked at him answering basic math questions as though he was a wild animal was alarming, to say the least. However, he was still supposed to be there, right?

"Light?" Ryuk paused the game, "Whatcha thinking?"

"I want to learn online, so I can get it done faster," he pondered, "But I still feel like I messed up being unable to even belong in school. And other children scare me. It felt like they were going to attack if I did anything out of line."

"Yeah, glad to know I wasn't the only one getting that vibe." He laid back on the bed, "Well, now you're done with that and gonna do fencing. That's the sport with swords, right?"

"Yup. It looks interesting, and I want to see if it's really like *The Princess Bride*. Of course, to see for sure, I would have to study different fencing methods globally, but I'm sure that's easy enough."

He relaxed a bit, coming to the conclusion that the thought of being normal was far scarier than the life he had now. If he was normal, that would mean he didn't have Ryuk in his life, which was not something he wanted to experience.

What did it matter if people thought he was weird? It was just some comments, and he knew he had friends in Matsuda, Ide, and Aizawa, so it wasn't like he was too weird to be befriended. He would be fine.

Besides, even if it was all an act, and he would still have Ryuk around, being ordinary sounded dreadfully boring anyway.

Chapter End Notes

> Yeah, online school was a thing in the mid 90s (current year in this fic is April 1995). Not a common thing, mind you, but technically a thing. I was shocked to learn this too.

# Chapter 13

Light was good at a lot of things. Within a month of starting online school, he pulled a few all-nighters in determination to finish up all of elementary school. Sometimes when Dad was home working late, they would work in the kitchen together, and Light was allowed to look at cases as a distraction. It was less out of learning anything, and more he already knew everything and was going through the motions.

He was used to being the best, far ahead of his time, which made it incredibly frustrating that he was consistently second place in fencing.

"I win," Yamamoto grinned, helping Light up, "You're getting better, Yagami."

"Not good enough it seemed," he shook his rival's hand, "Good game."

Yamamoto cleaned his glasses, "Thanks."

They were the top two students at the Tokyo Fencing School. Light supposed it made sense that Yamamoto was incredible at the sport since his family was mostly professional fencers. As frustrating as it was that he wasn't the best, it was actually exhilarating for there to be someone better than him at something.

He pulled out his planner in his backpack, one of which was to beat Yamamoto, and another was to build up the courage to talk to him for longer than a few moments after a match.

Class only had about five minutes left, and everyone was packing up. Ryuk put a hand on Light's shoulder encouragingly,

"Go talk to him, what's the worst that could happen?"

"He'll think I'm a freak," Light mumbled more to himself than anything else as he got out of his gear and packed up, heading towards the door.

Why couldn't he just be at home with his books? Or honestly, that might make him feel work, seeing characters in the stories he read being able to talk to a boy. Yamamoto was nice; why was he so nervous?

Mother was there to pick him up, and she smiled warmly, and he headed over. But seeing her actually happy with him made him

remember that he was only a week away from 490 days. He had to write names tonight before he forgot!

He headed to the car with Mother, seeing Sayu in her car seat, beaming and reaching for him, "Light! Can you do the magic when we get home?"

"Maybe," Light replied, looking to Mother, "Is Dad going to be home tonight? I know he's got a big case."

Mother looked to him before sighing, "Your father isn't going to be home for a while. He's the head of a big case right now."

"Dad's going to be safe, right?"

"Let's hope so." Light quickly realized they weren't headed home, "How about we go out to dinner tonight? Light, I expect you to shower and then be in bed at a reasonable time tonight. It's not good for you to be staying up so late."

"But tomorrow's a weekend, so I can just sleep in, right?"

"Yes, but I would prefer you don't follow in your father's sleeping habits, even if you did inherit his insomnia." The car stopped, and Mother helped Sayu out of her car seat.

Normally he would love to spend some time with Mother without getting lectured, but he had to write names tonight. He hated the week before 490 days, where his nerves got even worse than normal, and every second away from the Death Note made him uneasy until he had written names.

That was how the Death Note became alluring, he supposed, the dependence on it and the pain it brought to be away. If he wrote names more consistently, he suspected it would become an addiction, and he refused to let that happen.

But in moments like this, it was hard to concentrate on anything except writing. Light couldn't decide if it was better or worse that he remembered on his own instead of waking up in the middle of the night and being reminded instinctively.

"Light, are you alright?" Mother asked with concern, "You've hardly touched your food."

"Oh... I'm okay," he shook himself, playing with a strand of his hair as

a fidget and bringing himself to eat. Ryuk clearly knew what was going on and eyed him with concern.

"I told you the stress isn't good for you," Mother commented, and Light couldn't help but narrow his eyes bitterly. Maybe she meant well, but when he was growing anxious because he needed to kill tonight was not the time.

"I'm just not very hungry."

Mother's worried expression would never stop being strange to him, and he couldn't help but wonder if she was happy he was getting consistent 2nd place in fencing against a "normal" person.

He squeezed his eyes shut, forcing himself to eat quickly and remain calm. If Mother caught on that he was troubled about something, it could lead to more problems.

He let himself space out a bit through dinner, hoping it would just be over soon. He couldn't help but wonder what Dad or Matsuda or Aizawa or Ide would think if they found out the truth. It was why he limited his kills as much as possible.

But this hadn't happened before. Light was used to being able to get up, grab the notebook, write down a name or two, and then go back to bed. It was probably good he was figuring this out now since it was bound to happen plenty of times in his adult life.

When they finally got home, Mother was feeling his forehead, "Hm, you don't feel warm."

"I'm just a little tired from dealing with people," he replied on auto-pilot, heading upstairs, "I'll grab clothing for a shower."

Sayu ran up to him and hugged his leg, "Come play, Light!"

He bent down to her, ruffling her hair, "I'll play a little later, okay? I'm going to shower and then I'll be down to play." Ryuk picked her up, and she whooped with delight at the assurance, so Light headed upstairs, trying his best to not sprint.

When he got into his room, he locked the door and pulled out the Death Note from the hidden drawer he had built in his desk, pulling out a separate list of criminals on death row or who was exceptionally terrible.

He turned on the news just in case there were more and used his computer to look up some of the criminals in question, writing down five names with different dates and methods before he could even stop himself.

He felt the panic ease from his mind, and he relaxed in his chair, clearing his search history and turning off the television, looking down at the names he had written.

Ryuk was writing in his human observation journal, "So humans develop heightened anxiety when having not written for long periods? Is that concerning just the notebook, or in general?"

"I think just related to the notebook," he put the Death Note back in the desk, "Everyone else will understand if they find out, right? I'm only speeding up the inevitable for criminals on death row or will probably be killed in prison anyway." He couldn't help but remember what Aizawa mentioned about the corrupt system, and he slumped in his chair before deciding not to think about it.

Ryuk only shrugged, "I don't really see any problem with what you're doing. I'm sure it'll be fine."

"Well," he grabbed some pajamas, "The most I can do is make sure nobody finds out."

"You worry too much," Ryuk said, lounging from where he floated in the air, "Now, I'm not gonna harp on you like your mother, but why not try to not worry about things this weekend?"

"But there are so many things to worry about! I'm still 2nd place with fencing, I have junior high, Dad's working a lot again with nobody to stop him from overworking, and let's not forget that every day that passes is one where people who shouldn't could discover my secret."

"Wow you sound like your father," Ryuk commented, lounging against the wall while Light showered behind a curtain, "I'm just saying that maybe relaxing this weekend won't kill you. I'll even help you practice fencing."

Light threw a towel around his waist, exiting the shower, "You'd do that?"

"Sure, why not?"

He beamed, "Thank you, Ryuk!" He psyched himself, "You know what?

I'm ahead on my schoolwork. Maybe this'll help."

"I do have conditions," Light cocked his head, and Ryuk grinned, "If I help you beat that boy, you have to actually talk to him."

"And why do you care?" Light teased, "I thought you were just an observer."

"Yeah, but seeing as I am also playing the role of your parent, I feel it is my job to amuse myself by seeing you form a new relationship."

Light pouted as he got dressed, "But that means actually spending time with new people!"

"Isn't that the whole point of you doing a sport?"

"You know, I sometimes hate it when you're right." He took a deep breath, "Alright, I'll do it. I'll try and talk to him." Now fully dressed, he opened the door to head downstairs, "I hope you're ready for a long night of Sayu wanting to play."

"You say that like you weren't just as excited to get picked up when you were her age," to prove a point, he picked Light up, earning a laugh,

"Good point."

OoOoO

Light had had no idea how his lack of sleep had been affecting him until now. He and Yamamoto lunged at each other a third time, sabers clashing, and he felt as though he could actually react fast enough to not get hit.

It was like a cat-and-mouse-like game, chasing and escaping, attacking and dodging. Even with extra practice this weekend and more sleep, it was still a challenge. He didn't know how long the match went on, but he dully noticed everyone was watching now, and he barely managed to parry against a daring lunge from Yamamoto.

He could do this. Beat him at least once to prove to himself he could do it.

He took a deep breath and risked a move that he was beyond lucky actually hit Yamamoto's chest.

Light was hit four times, and Yamamoto five. It was over. Light had won.

Honestly, it was more shocking than anything else, and besides the usual shaking hand and acknowledgment of a good match, Light didn't really process it that much until he was back in the locker room.

"I told you that you could do it!" Ryuk laughed, and Light grinned, removing his gear and stuffing it in his bag, unable to wait until he could tell Dad all about it!

Of course, he couldn't say anything about it until he got home since talking to seemingly no one in the locker room would make him seem weird.

"How did you get those scars?"

Light tensed when he realized Yamamoto was behind him, and he noticed that this was the first time the two of them had interacted outside of gear. He looked down at his arm where the jagged marks remained from nearly two years ago, slightly darker than the rest of his skin. It was probably because he had scratched at them a lot while at the doctor during x-rays and after getting the cast off. "I feel out of a tree."

"Your parents let you climb trees?"

Light chuckled awkwardly, "It's more that they've given up on stopping me." Okay, should he stop the conversation now, go home and regret everything? Or risk being considered a weirdo and keep talking? Was it too much to hope that Yamamoto would keep the conversation going until there was some sort of common interest between them besides fencing?

"You went to Sendagaya Elementary School, right?" Light perked up at that, "That was you I saw in the halls, right?"

That was something he could work with, "Yeah, I used to go there, but I pulled out to do online school, which was a better fit for me so I could learn at a faster pace." He chucked a bit, and he was surprised to see Yamamoto not looking at him like he was abnormal. He seemed excited,

"That's really cool!" He then paused for a second, "Do you want to come over to my place sometime? You probably need some friends if you're not out very often." He grinned, "And I'll be your friend!"

Light beamed, and Ryuk had a smug expression on that he was right. He ignored the Shinigami, only giving a small smirk of acknowledgment, before giving a broad grin, "I'd love that!"

"Light!" He looked towards the door where he heard Mother, and he grabbed his bag,

"Coming, Mother!" He looked to Yamamoto, who was casually leaning against the wall with his hands behind his head in a relaxed position, "Sorry for not talking to you before."

"It's okay. You're shy, right?" Light nodded sheepishly, only getting a friendly grin in response instead of any judgment. They both hurried out to their respective mothers, cheerfully talking about their day.

"I told you that you could do it," Ryuk nudged him as they got in the car, "Was that so hard?"

"So you made a friend your age, Light?" Mother asked eagerly, and Light nodded,

"Yeah, and I finally beat him in a match too!"

Mother sighed, "Light, sweetie, you don't have to be the best at everything."

"I know, but I like being the best or at least proving I can be." He rocked back and forth in his seat, "So is Dad going to be home tonight?"

"I don't think so, Light."

Light pouted, but then he got an idea, waiting until nighttime to go through with it. He heated up some leftover dinner and snuck out from his balcony, letting Ryuk carry him to the NPA building, where his presence was normal at this point, and the guards didn't comment anymore.

He knocked quickly on Dad's office door before letting himself in, "Hi, Dad!" He held up the food, "I brought you dinner!"

Dad looked to him from where he had been talking with someone on

the other end of a laptop Light didn't recognize. Was it new?

"Light, it's late."

"Has that ever stopped me before?" He ran over, sitting in Dad's lap and giving him the food, "Have you eaten recently?" The growl of Dad's stomach in response to the food told him that no, Dad had not eaten.

"Someone I'm working with was just getting some food for us," Dad replied, and Light looked at the screen, seeing nothing except the gothic letter 'L.'

He quickly realized who this was, "Dad, you're working with L on this case?!" He waved at the camera, "Hi, L!"

*"Hello. You must be the Superintendant's son."*

"Yup!" He looked up to Dad, "You guys are going to be done with the case soon, right?"

"I'm sure we will, Light," Dad assured him, looking tired, "But until we finish, I can't have you coming here unexpected, alright?"

"Oh..." he slumped, "Sorry."

"It's alright this time. Thank you for the meal." He grabbed his phone, dialing a number, "Ide, can you please take Light home?" He waited for a response, "Thank you." He put the phone down. "Apologies, L."

*"It's no trouble. It's only natural for your family to worry about you given the hours you have been pulling."*

Light blinked, "You get some rest too, L, okay? You can't be sleeping any better than Dad."

L was quiet, and another man in a jacket and a hat hiding his face came in, which made the hairs on the back of Light's neck stand on end. Still, he forced a polite smile, "Hello. I'm Light."

"Good evening, Light," was the gentle response that made Light and Ryuk relax, and Light gestured to the computer,

"Are you working with L?"

"That's right. I'm Watari."

Light nodded, and Ide came in, "Hey, Light. Your Dad's busy. Let's get you back home."

"Can you drop me off a block away so Mother doesn't find out?" Light asked, and Ide shrugged.

"I'll walk with you the rest of the way to make sure you get home safely."

"Deal!"

OoOoO

L rewatched the recorded footage of that meeting with the Superintendant from the moment the son, Light, had come in. The boy was unusually bright for his age if his language said anything on the matter, as he had been speaking fluent English when someone his age should only be barely learning.

Watari had commented the boy would be an excellent addition to the house and successor program, but L shut that down for multiple reasons. Most importantly, Light had a functional family he seemed to value deeply, or at least his father. To take him from that seemed cruel.

But there was something else, as L watched the footage again. The moment Light came into the room and sat on his father's lap, in the corner of the screen and slightly behind Mr. Yagami, and apple had floated by, not tied to anything. He didn't see what happened to the fruit after it passed fully behind Mr. Yagami, but he couldn't deny as he watched it again and again, what he was seeing.

Something about the Yagami child went beyond the average human, and L knew to bring Light to the house meant whatever that was would most likely become further hidden. Whatever that thing with the apple was, if it truly was tied to Light, being caught on camera had a 97% chance of being a slip-up that would cause panic if realized.

Watari said he hadn't seen an apple at all, which meant the apple must have disappeared. Well, Light did have a backpack with him, so could that be it? But why would he take an apple in such a manner anyway?

He smirked a bit. This case he was working on was very interesting, and he would wait for now to see what became of Light and take note of this footage.

Because something told him he was going to meet Light Yagami again, and that could prove to be the most interesting case of all.

# Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

There has been a 4 year time skip. Date is July 1999, Light is 10.

Light was distracted from his phone call with Yamamoto while tutoring him in arithmetic by the sound of his parents arguing. In the last four years since he had started school, this wasn't particularly a common occurrence, but it wasn't exactly unheard of.

*"Hey, is everything okay?"* Yamamoto asked. Light looked towards the door to his room, gesturing for Ryuk to investigate. Light frowned a bit, reading through his textbook.

"Yeah. My parents are just loud." He read through the textbooks he was glad to have not donated so Sayu could use them when she was older, "I'm going to go make sure Sayu doesn't wake up, do you think you'll be able to use what I taught you tonight for the test tomorrow?"

*"Yeah, no worries, Light. Thanks for helping out,"* he laughed, *"And remember to actually relax for summer break. If you need someone to talk to, rememer to just call."*

"Have fun in France!" He grinned, and they both said their goodbyes before Light hurried downstairs to see what the trouble was.

"Sachiko, I have to go!"

"You promised me you would take care of the kids so I could have the weekend off!"

Dad was clearly torn, "I know, I promised that, and it's really short notice. But you know Mother's not good about that. I don't see my family very often."

"What's going on?" Light asked, "And can you keep it down so Sayu doesn't wake up?"

Dad sighed, "I got a last-minute invitation to my nephew's wedding since they messed up my address and gave me a phone call. I have to be in Hawaii in a week, but that lines up with your mother going out for the weekend with her friends."

"I can take care of things," Light offered, "I've been taking care of

myself and Sayu since I was four."

"Light, that's not the same as being home alone for three days," Mother replied, holding her hands up before sighing, "It's fine, dear. I'll just cancel so you can go to the wedding."

"No, Sachiko, we can think of something." Dad insisted, "It might be more expensive, but I can probably bring Light and Sayu with me."

"Do you really think Sayu will be able to sit through a wedding? And what about Light's secret?" Mother snapped, and Light walked over to the phone, "Light, what are you doing?"

"I'm calling Aizawa." Aizawa answered before Mother or Dad could protest, "Hey, Aizawa! How are you doing?"

*"I've been better, how about you?"*

"Listen, I know you have the baby to worry about," Light said, "But do you mind coming over for the weekend? You don't have to miss work, but just overnight so Sayu and I aren't alone. Dad needs to go out of town short notice."

*"I can make time. I don't care when. Get me out of here. Next weekend?"*

"Yeah."

*"I'll be there."* The line went dead, and Light grinned, turning to his shocked parents.

"Aizawa will be here!" He grinned lazily, seeing Ryuk giving him an impressed thumbs up, "Honestly, you don't have to get all worked up about this until you try some problem solving."

"Light, you can't just call Aizawa or Ide for everything," Dad said, and Light shrugged.

"I spend a lot of time with him, and it's easy to see he wants any excuse he can get to escape his wife." Dad grimaced as though he knew that fact all too well, "I was just giving him as escape he can get paid for. Besides, I know I can take care of Sayu on my own, so this is more for your comfort than mine."

Dad was taken aback, and then he smiled a bit, "I'll make a deal with you, Light. If Aizawa tells me that you can take care of yourself and Sayu, I'll let you start being alone with her. My mother was leaving

my sister alone with me when she was your age."

Light blinked, both at the deal and the family details that hadn't been brought up before, not that he had ever thought to ask. He decided not to push it because surely there was a reason he hadn't met his relatives—perhaps to keep his secret—and he headed upstairs to check on Sayu.

Sayu was awake playing with her dolls. At seven years old, she adored all kinds of toys, but surprisingly her games often involved being a police officer. Light felt a bit of envy that she already knew what she wanted to be, and he was unsure. He knew he wanted the help people and change the laws and such, but weren't most politicians corrupt?

A dark part of his mind pitched the idea of using the Death Note to force change, but he shook that away. As corrupt as the system may be, killing politicians wouldn't get him anywhere if he wanted to make a change. But to become one himself meant he was outnumbered by those who were self-serving and wanted to become rich.

She looked up, "Why were Mommy and Daddy fighting?"

"They were tired and didn't have basic problem-solving skills," he explained with a nonchalant hand gesture, "Aizawa's coming over next weekend."

Her face lit up, "Is he bringing the baby?"

"Maybe," he sat down with her, "I have a mission for you. We have to prove to Mother and Dad that we can take care of ourselves." Well, he supposed they wouldn't be alone. They would still have Ryuk, as always.

Sayu pondered this, "I could do that. But you need to help me with my homework."

"I already do that but okay," they shook hands, and Light got up to head to bed, and he was surprised to have Dad come in when he was reading with Ryuk.

"Hey, did your mother put my suitcase in your closet again?" He opened the closet and paused at the sight of nothing hung up and all in a massive pile on the floor, before he took the suitcase off the shelf and slowly closed the closet, "Well, I'm never looking in there again."

"Dad?" Light bit his lip, "Do you not see your family often because of

my secret?"

"What? No, it's nothing like that at all," Dad sat down with him, "It's just... you'll understand when you're older. There are some aspects of my family life that you shouldn't have to understand yet."

"But I'm smart, right?" Light tried, "And I know things."

Dad sighed, pulling Light close, "Yes, Light, but sometimes there are things that anyone would be happy to not know. You're smart, but you're still young."

"Can I meet your sister one day, Dad?" He asked, and then noticed an expression of unimaginable pain on Dad's face that he tried to hide but failed as he pulled Light closer,

"I wish you could... she loved you so much, Light."

Suddenly, it clicked, and Light realized the kind of pain Dad was in, turning to hug him tightly. It was this silent confirmation that he knew his aunt was dead that made Dad come undone and openly weep. He tried to not do that often since Light had gotten into the habit of catching him when the panic attacks set in, but it was raw moments like this that made Light know to never be ashamed of his emotions.

"Why don't you see my cousins more often?" He asked hesitantly, and Dad laughed, wiping his eyes,

"If you spent your teenage years with your insufferable brother in law, you'd stay far away too." He smiled, "I do talk to the kids occasionally, but I already know if the boys knew about your secret they would have tried all sorts of dangerous shenanigans with you to test your abilities."

"That sounds fun!" Ryuk nudged Light, "Are you sure you don't want to sneak into the suitcase?"

Dad got up, "I'll talk with them at the wedding and pray your cousin doesn't have as bad taste in spouses as his mother."

"Or yours, Soichiro," Ryuk snarked, laying down lazily.

"Night, Dad!"

Dad kissed Light's forehead, "Goodnight, Light." He left the room, and

Light jumped up and to his desk, grabbing a piece of spiral notebook paper and a pen.

"Alright, Ryuk, we need a game plan for this weekend."

"Like... which *Final Fantasy* game to play? Blindfold style?" Light smirked a bit at the mention of his new favorite challenge with Ryuk, for one of them to be blindfolded and playing the game, and the other needing to explain what to do to not die. It worked for practicing communication skills if he wanted to be able to work in a team or be an influential person one day.

"No, like a way to prove I can take care of myself and Sayu for a weekend."

"And maybe the baby if Shuichi brings it over."

"Right..." he bit the end of his pen, "Dad did most of the actual baby work with Sayu, and I just kept her busy. Babies aren't hard, right? You just feed it, maybe sleep it." He huffed, spinning around in his chair, "I'm starting to sound like you referring to babies as 'it.'" Ryuk cackled, munching on an apple,

"You take after me so much." He sat down next to Light, "But babies seem like a lot of work. I wouldn't know, because the most I did was feed you, bathe you, play with you, and change your diaper when your mother wanted to pretend you didn't exist."

".....So you raised me and actually know what you're doing?"

"Knew what I was doing? Absolutely not. I just copied your Dad, Hideki, and Shuichi." He shrugged, "But I guess I have some understanding of it."

"Alright!" Light started writing, "I am going to avoid asking for help, but I may need help compling a list of things I need in the event I do need to take care of a child."

"The tables are turning as you decide to take care of Shuichi and possibly his child," Ryuk cackled, "Well, this ought to be interesting."

OoOoO

When Aizawa sat down on the couch, his infant daughter in hand, Light already knew something was seriously wrong. He had grown up his whole life with Aizawa, and not only could he tell that he had lost his passion and it was no better than the last months since Yumi was born, but he was also sitting a little weird as though trying to not straighten or relax.

"Baby!" Sayu took baby Yumi, "Come on, baby! Let's go play."

"No," Aizawa grunted a bit as he sat up, taking Yumi, "She's too little. I have a mat or something for her to play on. Eriko's determined to work as long as possible, even though I keep telling her she can work as much as she wants to and being a parent won't change that—" he took a breath and winced, stopping his tangent, "Nevermind."

Light's brow furrowed, "Aizawa, are you okay?"

"Yeah, just a little tired." He smiled, "Having a baby and working late hours isn't easy. At least she's not flying or crawling into vents. Don't get me wrong, you're a good kid, but I do not know how your father dealt with it."

He sat down next to Aizawa, staring intently at his chest, taking note of exactly the way he was sitting, "Why are you sitting funny?"

"I'm just a little sore from an incident with a case," was the bitter reply, "Nothing to worry about, Light." But the harshness of the statement struck Light as odd, and he made eye contact with Ryuk, who casually opened Aizawa's shirt, much to his loud protest as Light took the sleeping Yumi and laid her on her back on a play mat.

"Apple Demon!" Aizawa shouted, going to close his shirt, but Light saw the dark bruises and he quickly stopped him. "Hey, you can't just open someone's shirt like that!"

"What happened?" Light didn't touch the bruising, trying to get a feel for what exactly he was dealing with. Was it broken ribs? What was the severity? Was it just bruised?

Sayu cocked her head at him, "Uh... Light, that's bruises. It's not rocket science."

"Yeah, but," he saw Yumi had rolled over and was trying to get around like that, "Gah! Sayu, can you take her?" He went back to examining Aizawa's ribs, gently prodding them and getting a pained response, "Yeah, broken." He looked up, "Have you gone to the doctor?"

"Not yet. I've dealt with worse on my own."

"That's not good!" He jumped up, "Stay there, I'm getting my notes to see what to do." Aizawa didn't even question why he would have notes for that, and Light hurried upstairs to grab his medical notebook with notes about dealing with any medical situation from what he had learned in his books.

Ryuk looked over his shoulder, "Ice, pain killers, deep breaths?"

"Yeah, and doctor, but I can't drive, and chances of making him drive are none, meaning I should call Ide to force him to the doctor." He grabbed his cell phone, sending a quick text that Aizawa broke himself and was stubborn, and hurried back downstairs, Ryuk grabbing the ice pack and wrapping it in a towel, and Light grabbed the ibuprofen. "Alright! I have ice, meds, and Ide is one his way and going to force you to go to the doctor while I take care of your baby!"

"You are going to give yourself an atlas complex, kid," Aizawa grumbled, "If you don't have one already."

"Atlas complex..." he thought back to that, "Oh. The one where the person wants to take responsibility for everything? Nah, I don't have that. You've just helped me my whole life and I want to return the favor."

Sayu was lying on her stomach, playing peek-a-boo with Yumi and having the time of her life before picking her up, "I'm gonna go play dress up with Yumi!" Light snapped his fingers, gesturing to Ryuk to take Yumi and hold her safely.

"That is not okay," Aizawa commented, "Watching the chief's baby fly is one thing, but when it's your own baby, that is just not right."

"Come on, you know as well as I do that Ryuk's carrying her and she's not really flying." He gently put the ice pack to Aizawa's ribs, "Lay down."

"I can take care of myself. Didn't you already call Ide?"

"Yeah, because I would rather delay the inevitable."

"So what exactly is Ryuk?" Ah, the question Light had known was coming for years, "Do you even know?"

"I don't know," he lied, "And honestly, it's not my business as long as

he's not hurting anyone." He bit his lip as he handed Aizawa the ibuprofen to take, "How did you even do this? You said it was a case, but wouldn't someone know about it?"

"Ide was on another case and he's the only one who cares enough to notice," was the sardonic answer, "But it could be worse."

"Deep breaths," Light reminded him, "To avoid pnemonia."

Sayu came down, carrying Yumi, seeming to have taken her from Ryuk. Yumi was crying where she lay on Sayu's shoulder, "Light, I can't make her stop crying."

"Give her to me," Aizawa said, and when his daughter was in his arms, he examined her for a moment, "She's hungry. I have some baby food in my bag."

"Oh! I also got formula!" Light hurried to the kitchen and mixed up some formula in a bottle, "Here we go!"

He jumped a bit when he heard frantic knocking on the door, and Ryuk opened the door as Ide came running in, "Shuichi! Light texted me that you're hurt!"

"I'm fine," Aizawa insisted, ice against his ribs, "My ribs are just a little bruised."

"That is not just a *little* bruised!" Light sat on the ottoman while he fed Yumi, watching Ide fret over his partner. "That's it, I'm taking you to the hospital!"

"What?" Aizawa yelped as he ended up in Ide's arms in a bridal-style carry, "I'm fine, Hideki!"

"Tell that to your ribs," Ide replied dryly, looking to Light, "Are you coming with or can you watch Yumi?"

"I'll watch Yumi," Light offered, "Hospitals are boring and chances of not losing track of Sayu is about 23%." He sat Yumi up as the adults left, "Well, it looks like it's just us, Yumi." Yumi giggled and stuck her hands in her mouth.

Sayu looked to her brother for guidance, "What do we do now, Light? Can we eat treats?"

"You know what? Fine, go get yourself a treat, but not too much!" he

set Yumi on her stomach on the mat with her toys. That seemed like the right thing to do. He turned to his notes, remembering things Aizawa mentioned Light used to do as a baby, so he knew what to look out for. Flying shouldn't be an issue, but the vents may pose a threat.

Was it safe to take a few steps away to the kitchen to make dinner? That sounded okay. He went to make some noodles as a quick dinner, waiting for the water to boil when Yumi started making noises of distress.

"What do you need? What do you need?" He hurried over, laying down at her level as she continued to whine, "I don't speak that language! Um..." maybe she was tired? She didn't seem to need a diaper change. He moved over to the closet, grabbing the foldable portable crib playpen thing they still had from when Sayu was little, just in case another surprise pregnancy happened.

Getting everything set up in the closet as a makeshift nursery, he picked Yumi up to set her inside, and she giggled, grabbing his hair and pulling.

"Ow, ow," he winced, "You can stop now." He had to sit her on his arm and use his other hand to free his hair, and they lay her down, leaving the door partially open so he could hear her, and he looked to Sayu, a finger at his lips.

"Is she sleeping?" Sayu asked, and Light nodded,

"Yeah. If you turn on a movie, it needs to be on a low volume." He sighed, "So how are you doing, Sayu?"

"I'm good!" She chirped, stirring in a bowl, "I want Dad's cookies, so I'm making cookies." Light smiled fondly, knowing Dad did make phenomenal cookies, only ever saying it was a family recipe.

"Do you want any help?"

Sayu shrunk down a bit, "Maybe with the oven? It scares me." Then she straightened, her pigtails bobbing with her movements, "But no more helping! I'm gonna be Mom now!" She grabbed Mother's apron and tied it. Light went to put the noodles in the boiling water, but she pointed her whisk at him, "No! Bad brother!"

He held his hands up, "Um... okay then? I'll read then." He grabbed an apple from Ryuk and sat on the couch, reading one of the Sherlock

Holmes novels, *A Study in Scarlet.* He loved Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's works, and it made him want to try his hand in writing one day.

But the real reason he loved the stories so much was that they made him think of L. Even if it had been four years and he had only met the detective for a few moments, he couldn't get that gothic letter out of his head. He had asked Dad about L, only to get the answer he had been around for years and was the best at what he did. Nobody except Watari knew who he was or where he came from.

Part of Light wanted to use his skills to hunt down L and learn who he was. He wanted to know more about this mysterious person who worked with the police worldwide. The only thing stopping him was fear of his secret being discovered. No doubt a world-renown detective would catch on and want to discover what was going on, and therefore, the Death Note could be in jeopardy.

It was moments like this he hated needing to be so careful so Ryuk wouldn't be discovered. He wanted to meet L; he wanted to be able to be fully honest with Yamamoto. Matsuda knew the truth, but he was busy with school and studying for the entrance exams in January. Light was almost through high school online, but he still had one year's worth left, which, while he estimated he could get done by December if he really put his mind to it, he wasn't allowed to take the entrance exam until he was seventeen. He could help Matsuda study and practice since he planned to be joining the police academy and the NPA, Light had seven years of doing nothing before he could take the test.

He planned to maybe start tennis since he had managed to best Yamamoto after years of figuring out his tricks and won some awards for it. It was still a challenge to beat him, but he also wanted a change of pace so things wouldn't be boring for him and Ryuk.

Mother said he should spend that free time going out so he would finally start crushing on girls like other boys his age, and Light tried; he really did, but he just didn't understand the appeal. *Great,* he had thought bitterly to himself, *Another thing that makes me 'not normal.'*

He hadn't told anyone, but he was beginning to see the other boys in his fencing classes who had begun approaching him for tips as far more interesting than the girls who sometimes said hello. He had asked Matsuda about it and was glad to get a normal response that maybe he was still too young, or maybe he would never be attracted to girls like that, rather guys. It was probably something to be sure of

when he was older, but Matsuda even confided that he found himself attracted to both men and women.

If he did end up just being attracted to men, he was pretty sure Dad would accept him, Aizawa and Ide wouldn't care in the slightest and just say "good for you" or something like that, but what about Mother? What about Yamamoto? He knew Yamamoto's family was pretty traditional like Mother, so what would come of that?

Even if it wasn't something he should be worrying about until he was older, he had a tendency to worry about things, as Ryuk had pointed out on more than one occasion.

He was snapped out of his book and thoughts about possible futures and mystery detectives when he heard Yumi crying.

"Light, she's up," Ryuk gestured to the closet, "She's making the noises."

Light got up, "You alright, Sayu?"

"I got the cookies in the oven!" She shouted triumphantly, bouncing up and down in her victory dance.

Light took Yumi out of the playpen and immediately knew the issue, "I'm going to go upstairs and change her. I'll be right back, Sayu."

He set her on a mat on the bathroom counter, opening Aizawa's bag he had brought with him, pulling out a diaper. Ryuk chuckled,

"I should warn you, she could roll off."

"She could what?!" He put one hand on Yumi's stomach quickly while he used his knee to support the bag and used his hand to dig inside, also seeing a garbage bag probably for dirty diapers. He held up the clean diaper, "Uh... how do you do this?"

"I'll show you," Light sat on the counter, watching intently as Ryuk instructed him on what to do, involving cleaning Yumi off and tossing the dirty diaper in the bag before putting on a clean one, "I'm not doing that again. It would have been much more fun to watch you struggle. I thought I was done with the diapers when you were out of them."

"Thanks, Ryuk." Light put Yumi back in her onesie and picked her up, sitting on the floor and lifting her in the air a few times, seeing she

stopped crying when he did that. It was exhausting after a few rounds, lasting probably around fifteen minutes before he carried her downstairs, and he heard a cry from the kitchen, and he sprinted, Yumi in his arms as he saw Sayu was shaking, and the cookies were on the stove, "Sayu!" He rushed to her side, "Are you okay? Did you burn yourself?" He shut the oven the rest of the way with his foot, "What's wrong?"

"I almost slipped," she whimpered, "That was scary." She hugged his neck, and Light passed Yumi to Ryuk as he embraced Sayu, assuring her it was alright,

"Sayu, you could have told me the cookies were done and I would get it out of the oven."

"But I want to be grown up too!" She whined, and Light put his hands on her shoulders,

"Sometimes people need help. It's not about how capable you are, just that it makes things easier to have assistance." He didn't know what he would do without Ryuk.

Yumi began to cry again, unlike Light not being a fan of being carried by something she couldn't see, and Light took her back and sat her in a high chair. He had been ready for the moment he ended up taking care of Yumi since he called Aizawa, and he was glad Dad was prepared enough to still have kept everything from when Sayu was a baby in the storage unit not far from their house.

Sayu came over after a few moments, "I have dinner!" She put the seasoned noodles in front of Light and where her own place would be, and Light noticed an apple next to his bowl, which he slipped to Ryuk, and there were also cookies in the center. "Can I feed the baby?" She gestured to the baby food Light had been about to feed her.

"Alright." Light ate his dinner, watched Sayu feeding Yumi, or rather gave Yumi the spoon and let her make a mess and seeming to hit everywhere except her mouth. He watched for a moment before Sayu took the spoon and guided it to where it had to go, then he grabbed some paper towels for Sayu. He finished dinner and hurried upstairs to take out the bathroom trash before it sat too long, took it out to the can on the street, and returned.

"Did you like dinner, Light?" Sayu asked, and he nodded,

"Yeah, you're really good with seasonings, Sayu." He grabbed one of

the cookies, "Can I have one?" She nodded, and he took a bite, grinning, "Woah! These are great!" He had been slightly worried something would go horribly wrong, but he was relieved to find nothing did.

Sayu pouted, however, "But they're not like Dad's."

"But are they Dad's? No, they're yours, and they're amazing." He took another bite, "You could probably start a bakery if you keep this up."

"You think so?" Her eyes lit up with that pure joy Light would do anything to preserve. He knew the world would throw a lot at them, but even if he had to use the Death Note and expose himself, he wouldn't let anyone harm her.

Ryuk ate one of the cookies under the table where Sayu couldn't see, "I prefer apples," Light giggled, then looked up when the door opened, and Ide came in, still carrying Aizawa in his arms and kicking the door shut behind him. Aizawa still didn't seem happy about this but had accepted it more, relaxing with his head on Ide's shoulder.

"Da!" Yumi clapped with glee, reaching for her father as he was rested on a part of the couch while Ide got it set up like a bed at an angle, so Aizawa was rested at an angle.

"How is he?" Light asked, and Aizawa rolled his eyes,

"I'm not unconscious or anything, you can ask me. I'm fine. It's just a fracture, and I got my ribs bound," Aizawa looked up at Ide with a smirk, "I told you I was fine on my own."

"What if the rib broke off completely and punctured your lung?" Ide asked in exasperation, "You could have died and who would know how to help you?"

Aizawa raised a skeptical eyebrow, "Don't you think you're being a little dramatic?"

"No," Light defended, "That could have been a possibility and you may not have lasted until an ambulance came."

"You too, Light?!" He groaned, "Can I take the bindings off, it's getting uncomfortable to breathe."

"Why did they give you bindings?" Light asked as Ide helped Aizawa out of the bindings, "Doesn't that defeat the purpose of deep breaths?"

"You're the one who told me to go to the doctor and now you're critiquing the doctor?" Aizawa asked incredulously, "Why am I not surprised. Was Yumi okay while you were gone?"

Sayu finished cleaning Yumi up, "She was great! She napped, and we fed her, and changed her, and I played with her." She set Yumi down at Aizawa's side, and Yumi smiled to see him.

Light turned to Ide, "I assume you're staying?"

"Yeah, I'm not leaving him here injured, just in case something goes horribly wrong." He clapped his hands, "Alright, ladies, gentlemen, and apple demons," Sayu didn't comment, having long since assumed apple demon was a code for Light's abilities since she still didn't know Ryuk was a separate entity. "I think the plan for tonight is a movie, those cookies on the table, and then bed for Yumi and Sayu?"

"Why do I have to go to bed and Light can stay up?" Sayu complained, and Light ruffled her hair,

"Because I am older than you, and you still need to keep your school internal clock."

"No fair, you don't have to go to school." Light laughed and relaxed.

They ended up watching Disney's *Hercules,* for the sake of the little girls. Light did his best to just sit in his armchair and listen to Ryuk instead of the mythological inaccuracies that physically pained him, such as why was Hades the villain in this movie? Why not Hera? Why was Zeus seen as decent in this film? Hades was the most reasonable of the gods in the legends. And where was Persephone?! And he wasn't even going to touch the name issue of the main protagonist of this movie.

Besides making his mythology nerd side cringe, it did beg the question. If anyone found out about his connection to a Death God, did it matter what he did? Would he only be remembered as the villain?

He looked over to where Aizawa was asleep, and it never stopped being funny to Light that any form of television meant for kids worked faster on Aizawa than tranquilizers. Ide had a loving smile on his face, and Yumi was lying on her father's leg, and Sayu was leaning into the television. Ryuk laid on the floor, cackling at everything wrong with the movie.

These people, Matsuda, and Dad, were basically his family. They had been with him through thick and thin, even at the beginning with the strangeness of Ryuk's presence. Ryuk supported him no matter what and cared for him when nobody else could.

As long as they thought he wasn't a monster, did it matter what the world thought?

# Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

The date is December 1999

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Light pressed his palm to his eyes in the bathroom during fencing practice. He had thought it was just a minor headache earlier, which was by no means uncommon, but as the class had gone by, he was starting to think it was something else.

Ryuk was watching over his shoulder as he splashed cold water on his face, "You okay?"

"Just playing a game."

Ryuk brightened, "What game?"

"Is my headache from dehydration, caffeine withdrawal, lack of proper nutrition, stress, not enough sleep, not talking to Dad about possibly needing glasses, or a brain tumor." He groaned and covered his eyes with his arms. Why were the bathroom lights so damn bright? One of the lightbulbs had even burned out, so it should be dimmer in here.

"That doesn't sound very fun."

"It's not." He headed out of the bathroom in hopes of grabbing his water bottle. He was stopped by Sensei.

"There you are, Yagami." Sensei's brow furrowed, "What's wrong?"

"Bad headache," he whispered, shielding his eyes from the lights, "Do you mind if I sit out while I try to get this under control?"

"Of course," Sensei replied, "Do you want me to call your mother to pick you up?"

"Sure," he murmured, "Not like she'll show up, but it won't hurt. I'll be in the locker room if that's alright."

"Take your time," Sensei said softly to him, helping him into the locker room, where he laid down on one of the benches, wincing as the pain spiked just above his eyebrow.

When they were alone, Ryuk switched the lights off and hovered over Light, not talking, knowing that it would only make things worse. But the pale red glow of Ryuk's eyes was enough to make Light groan and turn on his side.

He heard the door open, but the lights weren't turned on. He was startled to hear Yamamoto whispering, "Hey, Sensei wanted me to tell you your mom's coming to pick you up." He shut the door, finding his way in the dark and sitting on the floor in front of Light's face, "Are you okay?"

"Just a headache," he covered his eyes with his arm and then felt what seemed like a coat being draped over him like a blanket and his head being moved, so he was resting in Yamamoto's lap.

"I'm not gonna leave you until your mom shows up, okay?"

Light hummed a bit in acknowledgment, glad for the darkness to hide how red his face became despite the pain with his head in Yamamoto's lap. Someone like him taking the time to leave the lesson and matches to stay with Light and make sure he was okay.

He felt fingers in his hair, massaging his scalp, and he didn't say anything, unsure he could talk without stammering even if he wasn't in skull-splitting pain.

They stayed there for a while, and Light drifted between wakefulness and sleep, not realizing he had snuggled closer to Yamamoto.

The door opened again, and he woke up from the half-sleep he had been in, hearing Mother's voice whispering to Yamamoto, "I'll take him," and suddenly he was being picked up and carried by Mother just like how Sayu was. But Light never got this treatment. He was never held like he mattered.

"Take care of him," Yamamoto insisted, and Light didn't know how Mother responded as he buried his face in her shoulder, whimpering a bit. It was too bright.

He shivered at the cold air of outside as he didn't have his winter coat on, but relaxed somewhat when he was laid down in the back of the car with a blanket over him that he pulled over his face. He curled into a ball, clutching his head, trying to force the pulsing in his head to stop.

When they got home, he was carried upstairs and sat down on his bed,

and Mother closed the curtains so not even the street lamp outside could get in, "I'm gonna go get you something to help. Can you get out of your gear?" He was already laying down, and Mother sighed, "Apple Demon, help him." Then she left, and Ryuk looked down at Light,

"Alright, how do you get this stuff off?" he supported Light's head as he tried to figure out how to unstrap the fencing gear. Light helped him out for forced himself to stand and lean against the dresser, kicking off his sweaty clothes and tossing the shirt in the hamper, tossing on an oversized shirt and pants, focusing on keeping himself upright before falling onto his bed.

Mother came back with some things and shut the door behind her, helping him sit up, holding out a small cup with dark red liquid inside, "This helps your father when he gets migraines. He can't swallow pills when he gets like this, so I doubt you would be able to. It's gonna make you feel a little silly, but it won't hurt as much, okay?" Light took the little cup and winced at the strong artificial cherry flavor, but that was fine if it would help.

He felt something pleasantly cold being placed on his eyes as he was laid down and wrapped up in the contents of his blanket nest. He felt his exhaustion beginning to overwhelm him, and he slowly drifted to sleep.

OoOoO

For three days, Mother took care of him with his migraine. For Light, it was mostly a blur between being slightly high on strong pain killers and coming in and out of consciousness. But in his few moments of lucidity when the migraine was tolerable, he couldn't help but wonder why Mother was helping him. She *never* helped him!

He was going through his anatomy workbook, trying to focus on the words since he felt much better but was still too tired to get out of bed. Mother came in with some rice, voice soft,

"Hey. Are you feeling better?"

"Yeah. Thank you." He took the rice, and Ryuk was watching Mother with a level of suspicion Light hadn't seen before as she sat down next to him.

"Can you read that?"

"Hm?"

"Your father told me that he started getting migraines when he was your age and needed reading glasses. I'm gonna take you to the eye doctor when you feel better, okay? We'll try to manage this to make sure it doesn't happen again."

"Why are you taking care of me?" He asked, staring at the ceiling, "What changed?"

Mother seemed taken aback by the question before brushing back his bangs out of his eyes, "Apple Demon can't help you with everything, now can he?"

"Good point," Ryuk mumbled.

"You take care of yourself so often that it seems like you don't need me." She smiled a bit, "But you needed me this time."

Light didn't fully buy it, but he didn't comment, "So I'm gonna get glasses?"

"Do you have a hard time reading?"

"It's a little blurry if the book's farther away from me, but I can read fine when it's closer to me."

"We'll see what the eye doctor sees, okay? If these migraines are going to be like your father's instead of a one-time thing, we should do our best to figure out what causes it."

"Dad gets these?"

"Sometimes, but they typically kick in at work, so he'll take some medication and lay down at the office." She chuckled a bit, "I know what you're thinking about this being more excuses to check on him, but I already talked to Aizawa and Ide about it to bring him home if it gets too bad." She pulled him close, "You know, even with your secret, you're already such a big help to him. We both love you, Light."

Light tried to wrap his head around this display of motherly affection. It was so uncommon that he didn't know what to do with it, and Mother going out of her way to tell him she loved him?

A thought occurred to him that she helped because this was normal

for a mother to help her son with; no supernatural assistance since Ryuk was clueless on what to do here. He grimaced, even if he did admit it was nice to hear he was loved from Mother instead of being assured she loved him by Dad.

Maybe he could find a way to persuade her to love him all the time? He was content without his human mother's affection—after all, he had Ryuk, who had been a mother figure to him his whole life. Still, there was something nice about being held like this. Was there a way to convince her it was worth her time to at least reach out sometimes?

He decided it didn't matter as he yawned, rubbing his eyes and being laid back down for a nap to get his strength back up. He ended up snuggling with Ryuk, and whether Mother noticed that or not, he didn't particularly care.

OoOoO

"When am I ever going to need this?!" Matsuda was looking at his homework Light was helping him with as they were studying together, "When am I *ever* going to need to have fractions on top of other fractions?!"

Light laughed, cleaning his new reading glasses. They made reading so much easier, but they got dirty so fast. "It is helpful sometimes."

"Yeah, but I'm planning to go to the police academy. When am I ever going to need this?! Can't we have some freedom of what we get forced down our throats?"

"I do wonder, but I like having the options."

"Says the kid who is gonna be graduating high school with me in March," Matsuda retorted playfully, "You still have your whole life ahead of you and I'm gonna be heading to the academy." He nudged Light with a smirk, "So would you like to explain why you're investigating detective L?" Light rubbed the back of his neck,

"How do you know about that?"

"I was looking for an eraser and found printed reports of all of L's cases." Matsuda replied, and Light hid his sudden tensing because that

was the same drawer as his desk trap for the Death Note that he really was getting worried about because that thing was basically a small bomb. He was considering defusing it unless the situation really called for that. After all, it had been hidden just fine under his mattress for years.

"Yeah, I'm looking for L," Light admitted, "Tracking down the world's greatest detective sounds like a fun challenge."

"What are you gonna do when you find him?" Matsuda asked, and Light paused as he thought about that.

"I don't know. If I tell L I found him, he might move and not give me the time of day. But going up to him and saying I tracked him is creepy. I might just keep it to myself..." he trailed off, leaning back on his hands, "I wonder what L's like," he smiled, thinking about the detective he had grown to look up to.

"And here I thought Yamamoto had won your heart," Matsuda teased, and Light turned bright red, looking away.

"What?!" he laughed awkwardly, "What makes you think that? I mean, sure, he's really nice and incredible, but I wouldn't say won my heart." Ryuk cackled,

"Your face is red, kiddo."

"Not helping, Ryuk!"

Matsuda rolled his eyes, "I'm just teasing you. But it's perfectly normal to have a crush."

"Yeah, but assuming I humor you and you're right, it's one on another boy."

"Do you really think your Dad will care? First thing he did when I started high school was give me a box of condoms since we both know my parents wouldn't help me in that regard, and tell me to not get AIDS." Light rolled his eyes. Dad had realized Matsuda wasn't being taken care of at home and took him under his wing like another son, so of course, that conversation had happened. In a sense, Matsuda was like his older brother.

Then he deflated as he really thought about what if he did feel something for Yamamoto, "It's not *my Dad* I'm worried about. Besides, I don't even know if he feels the same."

"Ah," Ryuk joined in, "But you're forgetting one key thing: we don't know he *doesn't* feel the same."

"Don't you use the same argument I used on Ide on me!" Light snapped, but he was grinning nonetheless. Matsuda leaned in, a twinkle in his eyes,

"Oh?"

"Nothing for you to worry about," he looked down at the books, "Should we get back to work?"

"Fine," Matsuda crossed his arms in a pout, "I really need to get a Ouija Board so I can actually know what Ryuk is saying." His eyes lit up as he pulled out a sheet of notebook paper and a pen, putting a little off to the side of Ryuk but a good estimate of where he was, "Can you write on that?"

"I could, but I want to know what a Ouija Board is," Ryuk said, putting the piece of paper on Matsuda's head. Matsuda looked at the paper,

"Fine, fine, you win, Ryuk. I'll work on these nightmarish fractions."

A knock on the door startled both of them, and Sayu came in, her pigtails bouncing as she ran in, "Hey Matsu! Mom wanted me to tell you guys dinner's ready. I even set a place for you too, Apple Demon!"

Light had decided to come clean to Sayu about where his abilities came from about a month ago, now that he was pretty sure she was responsible enough to understand. She was much more open to it than their parents had been initially and content to give Ryuk a place in the family if he truly was a separate entity. However, Light couldn't shake the feeling she thought he was messing with her about having a supernatural companion and was trying to call his bluff.

Matsuda got up, "Thank you for the meal," he helped Light to his feet, "Don't worry, your crush is safe with me." Light hid his face in embarrassment, and Matsuda ruffled his hair.

Light put his reading glasses on his desk and hurried downstairs to see Dad waiting for him, seeming tired after a long day at work. Light ran to embrace him, and he caught a glance at Mother. They still hadn't really talked about what happened last week with her spending days taking care of him. Things were back to normal now that he had his glasses. He still couldn't figure out how exactly he was going to persuade her.

But he decided it didn't matter, at least not for now. For now, he was content to have dinner and further acceptance of Ryuk in the family.

Chapter End Notes

> Yes, I know only Americans use "eye doctor" phrase, and there is a reason for why this term was used which will be mentioned in a later chapter.

# Chapter 16

Light groaned when he woke up to Dad nudging him, rolling on his stomach, and hiding under the nice warm blankets, "Ten more minutes..."

The response he got was to have his blankets removed just torturously slowly enough to let him know what was happening as Dad suddenly laid next to him, "But we have work, and alas, sleeping in is a rare treasure."

Light groaned as his foggy brain remembered now that he had graduated high school with Matsuda, he had agreed to go with Dad to work the first day of every week. The goal was to see if he was interested in the law enforcement field. They had seven years to get him whatever he wanted for whatever profession he chose, so he had time to test his options. And maybe he could ask around about L.

He grumbled towards his closet, and Dad laughed, "Now you get to understand that being an adult is not fun. Embrace being a child while you can, Light."

Light put on some pants and a white button-up, and Ryuk shook him a bit to wake him up.

"Light-o, wake up!"

"I'm up, I'm up," he walked downstairs, where Dad was making coffee. Light looked to the clock that said it was four in the morning, "Dad, why do you get up so early?"

"I get the best work done when there's barely anyone else there to bother me," Dad replied simply, "Most people get there in about five hours. You can nap if you want when we get there, because it should be just be typing for a while." He offered Light some coffee, "Here, you like only a bit of sugar, right?"

"Yeah, thanks, Dad," he sipped the coffee, and Ryuk grabbed the apple in Dad's outstretched hand, and Dad wordlessly nodded to exactly where Ryuk was. He had to ask about that, "Dad, are you able to see Ryuk?"

"No, I've just gotten a feel for measurements and from there can determine where Ryuk is." He opened the door for Light, "You can sit

in the passenger seat. You're tall enough to be safe."

Light blinked a few times as he slowly came from his sleepy haze and walked into work with Dad, "So what exactly do you do, Dad?"

"I'm the Chief Superintendant," Dad explained, "One of the higher positions, even if it's largely a desk job. My job focuses on leadership, strategic alliances and partnerships, and carrying responsibility for all their area activities. I lead the development of culture, climate, and working processes across multiple areas to ensure adherence to standards and promote accountability and continuous improvement."

"So you have legal powers to enable the maintenance of law and order?"

"Exactly," he sat Light down, "Of course, that's not all I do. I tend to stay overtime to work on other cases."

"Why?"

Dad hesitated, "I...when my older sister passed away—it was about a month after Ryuk showed up—I was in a bit of a dark place, so I got into the habit of staying late and helping as many people as I could. I guess now it's just part of my routine."

"Wait..." Light paused, looking up at Ryuk, who didn't actually seem too surprised by this new information, "Um...were Mom and my aunt close?"

"Yes." Dad replied simply.

Light felt as though he had been slapped as suddenly everything clicked into place, about why Mother was so distant from him. "Does Mom blame Ryuk for my aunt's death?"

Dad was quiet for a few moments, "I've talked to her about it, and things have been getting better lately, right?" Light thought back to when Mother took care of him when he had a migraine, and while still not super chatty, was warming up. "I think things got better when my nephew was married, and she knew my sister wasn't really gone."

"What was my aunt's name?" Light asked, realizing he hadn't heard the name before. Dad hesitated, and Light noted the genuine fear,

"Her name was Claudia," Dad replied quietly before wiping his eyes, "Listen, I really do not like talking about my past. You can do

whatever you want. I'm sure some of the doors are unlocked if you want to look around the Bureaus."

"Alright, what do Aizawa and Ide do?"

"They've risen in the ranks fast since joining the NPA. Since I've spent so much time with them, they've learned a lot. They're both Chief Inspectors in the Criminal Affairs Bureau now."

"That's impressive."

"They're both hard workers." He hummed a bit, "They might be here now, I know Aizawa works overtime, and Ide hates leaving his side." Light brightened,

"I'm gonna go see them!" He made his way to the small kitchen and from there found his way to the Criminal Affairs Bureau, where, sure enough, Aizawa and Ide were there. Ide was asleep at his desk and had a blanket draped over him. Light kept his voice down, "Good morning!"

Aizawa turned, and Light's brow furrowed when he noticed Aizawa was wearing a scarf inside... in March. "Oh, what are you doing here so early, Light?"

"Dad wanted to take me to work, and I came to see if you were here." He looked over Aizawa's shoulder, "Whatcha doing?"

"Paperwork," he looked to Ide, "I really don't understand why he's so insistent on coming to work whenever I do. I would have thought..." he shook himself, "Nevermind. Nothing for you to worry about, Light."

"How did you meet Ide?" Light asked, "In the academy?"

"No," Aizawa shook his head, "We met about a year before joining the academy." He sighed fondly, "Those were simpler times." The way he looked at Ide made Light pause for a few moments, and he glanced at Ryuk to see if he was having the same thought process, which he seemed to be.

"If you don't love your wife," he asked, "Why did you marry her?"

Aizawa hesitated, "I—Uh—" he sat down, "Listen, kid, I grew up in a family where marrying for love was out of the question. I was damn lucky for an incident years ago, or I would have been married off at sixteen without a chance to convince my parents to let me court her

first."

"So it was an arranged marriage?"

"Yes."

Light slumped, "I don't understand that."

"You're a kid, Light. You shouldn't have to understand that."

Ryuk chuckled, "I wonder if there was someone he wanted to marry for love." Light decided not to ask that deeply personal question, noticing Aizawa grabbing the canister of what seemed to be cold soup and drinking from it, not even using a spoon,

"What...? That's soup, right?"

"Sure, sure, let's go with that," Aizawa grumbled, "Ask your Dad. It's his trick," he shrugged, "Anyway, I'm not doing much besides getting this paperwork done and waiting around for another case to work on. There's a rumor I'm going to be getting an apprentice of the sort in the near future, so I'd prefer to keep up on my work."

Light nodded to himself, and he thought back to when he had been talking to Dad. He didn't know what it was, but there was something... he couldn't help but feel like Dad was hiding something. He got up, deciding to do some investigating of his own.

"Well, I'll leave you be then," he said and waved cheerfully before heading back to Dad's office. Ryuk flew behind him,

"You're planning something."

"Something doesn't sit right with me," Light mused, "I think it's been on my mind for a while, but have you ever seen someone named Claudia in Japan?" Ryuk shrugged,

"I don't particularly pay attention to humans outside of ones connected to the owner of the notebook." Light smiled a bit as he walked into Dad's office, deciding his first course of action was to just ask.

Dad wasn't in his office, and there was a note on his desk saying he was in a meeting and would be back in about an hour. Light decided his next plan was to open the drawers and see what there was to see. He felt kind of bad about investigating something that was probably

nothing, but this was going to eat at him.

He mostly found basic office supplies and papers and some files of cases, but there was one thing he discovered in a drawer he had almost thought was decorative, that he may as well have struck gold. He pulled out the framed photo of a happy family, and it took him a few moments to realize the teenager, probably around fifteen or sixteen, was his father.

The photo seemed to be out at a lake, in front of a wooden cabin. It was a small family of five, but Light noticed quickly that the man next to the young woman he assumed was his Aunt Claudia was wearing a matching wedding ring. *Ah, so this is that brother-in-law Dad mentioned.*

But another thing he realized fast was that the family in this photo was not Japanese. The only two who had any visible traits of being Japanese were Dad and who Light assumed was his grandfather. He took the photo out of the frame and noticed writing on the back.

*LaMotte family vacation, 1973. Priest Lake.*

Ryuk laughed over Light's shoulder as he examined the photo, "Well would you look at that; your Daddy really does have a secret."

Light pulled out his laptop and looked up Priest Lake, and he blanched at what he found. It was a real place...in America.

*Why...? Why would Dad go to America?*

He then researched for half an hour, looking up Claudia to see if he would find anything now that he knew the surname. He jumped back from the computer as though he had been burned, putting the photo back in the frame and setting it in the back of the drawer hidden behind a bunch of pens.

What he found was that Claudia had been born and raised and passed away in a town eighty miles from Priest Lake. He checked a few times, and the surname, relative list, it all lined up.

Dad didn't just go to America with his family. He used to *live* in America.

Light closed those tabs and stuffed his laptop back in his bag, needing to do something to take his mind off of this. If Mother was close to Aunt Claudia, that means she had to know about this, right?

He went to the kitchen and made some more coffee, sitting at the table and staring at the wall as his mind tried to process this massive bombshell that everything he thought he knew about his family was a lie.

*It's not that big of a deal, right? It's not like Dad ever actually lied to me about where he came from. And if I'm right, this just means Dad's biracial and understandably moved to Japan. Given World War II, I guess it makes sense Dad keeps it a secret, and it's not like I would have guessed that immediately just by looking at him.*

He continued to think, knowing he needed to ask Dad all of these questions he was now dying to know. And looking back, it wasn't exactly this big secret since Dad mentioned going to Hawaii for his nephew's wedding, and at one point, it was on the table for taking Light and Sayu with him, meaning they would have found out.

When he snapped out of it, it was to Ryuk holding an apple in his face, "Are you with us, Light-o?"

Light blinked a couple times as he came back to reality, checking his watch and realizing it had been two hours, and he turned to the police radio with a crime scene and a body.

He brightened, needing something to pass the time until he could talk to Dad. He got the address and decided to walk there, making sure to buy some coffee first, knowing enough about the Chief Investigators even besides Aizawa and Ide from times he had stopped by to know what kind of coffee they preferred. This would give him an opening into the crime scene.

Ryuk laughed, "You're really going to walk into a crime scene just because you want something to do."

"Yup!" He adjusted just grip on the container he was using to hold the coffee, "Today has been extremely productive. I know why Mother's been distant from me for so long and I learned some family not-quite-secrets about Dad. I also learned Aizawa's in an arranged marriage and does not love his wife..." he grimaced, thinking about Aizawa's broken ribs months ago, occasionally having a slight limp, or now with the scarf hiding his neck. "And if I'm right about my hunch, she doesn't love him either." He looked up to Ryuk, "Humans make no sense to me, Ryuk. I know I'm human, but sometimes..." he sighed, and Ryuk shrugged,

"Well, part of my experiment when I decided to stay with you was

seeing how a Shinigami would impact an infant, so I suppose it makes sense you have more of a Shinigami's mind than a human."

"Yeah, I suppose you're right," he cleared his throat. His voice had been starting to drop lately, and it was kind of irritating how many times he needed to clear his throat in a given day. So far, he had been lucky today, but it was still early.

He noticed one of the new officers, Mogi, standing outside the door to the apartment complex of the crime scene. He waved, adjusting his hold again, "Mogi!"

Mogi waved, but he didn't say anything, looking at the floor. Light gestured to the apartment,

"So, what do you got going on up there?" He gave a playful grin, "Don't hold out on me now." He quickly realized Mogi wasn't going to talk, and Light gestured subtly for Ryuk to fly up and see what was going on. Ryuk came back after a few moments.

"Looks like suicide," Ryuk said, "According to Hideki up there, a guy from the phone company found the victim in his apartment. Been up there for a few days already. "

Light nodded, "Well, I heard Aizawa and Ide were leading this case. Do you mind if I head up there and bring them coffee? I wanted to bring it by." Mogi reluctantly nodded, and Light headed upstairs, hearing officers talking amongst themselves, and he noticed Aizawa and Ide talking,

"We found a note." Ide held up a piece of paper in a bag, "The body's been here at least three days. Maybe more. All signs point to a suicide."

Aizawa grimaced but didn't say anything on the matter as he turned to the people working under him, "All right, listen up. You know the procedure. I want this done right. I do *not* want any mistakes."

Light slipped into the kitchen, not yet wanting to be seen or get in the way. He noticed forensics looking through cabinets and not noticing the child at the crime scene. Ryuk looked down at Light,

"Okay, there is the body. What are you going to do now?"

"Investigate," Light replied simply, grabbing some rubber gloves from the box in the corner and opening up the cabinets as well to see if

there was anything that was missed. And in the fridge, he found it.

"Ryuk, check this out." Ryuk flew over and looked at the thing that Light was pointing to.

"A marinating steak?"

"Don't you find that a little odd?"

"That... a man would eat a steak?"

"No, that a man who was ready to kill himself would you take the time to marinate a steak for a future meal?" Light bit his lip as he couldn't help but wonder if there was more going on here than met the eye. He looked to the apartment door off to the side, "The door latch is still intact." He set the coffee on the counter, "Now, I know you don't really understand the question, but if you were gonna kill yourself, wouldn't you want the door to be locked so that no one could barge in on you right in the middle?"

He froze when Ryuk was looking behind him, and Light turned to see Ide looking extremely unamused, "What are you doing at this crime scene? Shuichi, we have an unexpected guest!" Aizawa came in and was also less than pleased.

"Light, what are you doing here?"

"I came to bring you coffee and help solve a murder," Light chirped, handing them both coffee. Aizawa sighed,

"Light, I don't think this was a murder. Come on, let's get you back to the station," Aizawa began guiding him out, and Light noticed by the body a grease stain, very small, but it seemed recent and not from the victim who was wearing socks.

"Then why was there someone else in the room with the victim when he died?" He gestured to the door, "Did you have to break down the door when you got here?"

"No, it was open." Ide said, "Why?"

"No, no. Don't encourage him," Aizawa snapped but then softened when he saw Ide's expression, "Light, just because the door was unlocked doesn't mean someone else was in here."

"But what about the grease stain or the marinating steak? Why would

someone planning to kill himself make that? Would someone in that mental state even bother?"

Aizawa pursed his lips. "Light..." he was cut off by his radio, and what was said made everyone's blood run cold.

*"Deceased is in the car, over."*

"The second body in a day?" Light asked, "Is that normal?" Aizawa shook himself,

"We don't know what caused this one, don't try and twist this like you're right until we know for sure." Light shrugged, and Ide crossed his arms,

"Are we bad babysitters for taking him with?" They all headed downstairs after collecting everything from this scene, and Ide passed Light off to Mogi, "Mogi, make sure he's not traumatized."

Light got in Mogi's car and looked out the window before deciding to make conversation, "So...how long have you been an officer?" Mogi was quiet.

He then remembered what Dad had said about Mogi being selectively mute, and it had taken a few weeks to get him to talk to just Dad, but he was a good officer.

Light decided to be quiet to not be a bother, and when they got to the crime scene, he hurried over to his babysitters, "I'll be okay, Mogi-San!" He noticed they were in a garage, "So what's going on here?"

"Well, the victim is a female in her late 20s." Ide replied, "We're waiting for forensics to confirm, but it appears to be a suicide and the body's been here for a couple days. Carbon monoxide poisoning. Asphyxiation." Light crossed his arms.

"I have a question."

"Yes?"

"How did somebody find the body if the garage door was closed as, if I recall correctly, is required for carbon monoxide poisoning or asphixiation to work?" He looked up to the investigators, "How would that be? Does she have a roommate?" He smirked a little, "Was the front door unlocked?"

Aizawa grimaced, "I can't believe the eleven-year-old has a point." He put his hand on his hip, "Alright, Light, I'll give you this. The first one could very well still be a suicide, you can't deny that, but with a similar pattern with the unlocked door...we should look into this." He eyed Light, "It's pointless to stop you from getting involved, right?"

"Yup!"

He groaned, "Fine. If you're going to be hanging out here today, may as well let you be useful." Light bounced on the balls of his feet in excitement as Ryuk laughed,

"So we're off to solve a murder case. How interesting."

OoOoO

After going through records of the last month, four of the investigated suicides lined up with the abnormal findings found at both crime scenes today, with the question of why the bodies were only being discovered now.

Light huffed as he looked at the board with a bunch of images taped to it with lines connecting all of them. "Four separate suicides, two of which occurred before this was really a case, and I don't see a pattern of any kind."

Ide nodded, "Different ages, different sexes. Different socio-economic levels. Different methods of death. No duplicate weapons, locations. First, we have a jumper, second, an oven, third, pills, fourth, carbon monoxide." He ran a hand through his hair, "Maybe we have to look further back in the records to find a link?"

"No, I think this is the starting point," Light replied, "Think about it. In most cases, at least in Japan, the goal is to draw as little attention as possible, right? So maybe the jumper was actually pushed? It was from his window, after all."

Dad came in, "So I hear Light wormed his way into an investigation." He examined the board for a few moments, "Supposed suicides? Check the phone records, you'll probably find a lead there. Maybe they all called a similar place."

Light brightened, "Dad, that's it! Someone from the phone company found the first body today, right? How would that have happened?" He checked a few times, "Check the phone records, and we have ourselves a suspect!"

Dad smiled, "Alright, little detective, are we going to head home?" He looked up at Aizawa and Ide, "The case can wait until tomorrow. You both look exhausted."

"I'm alright," Aizawa replied, gesturing to his coffee, "I'll go through the phone records."

"No," Ide grabbed Aizawa's hand and helped him up, "You're staying at my place tonight if you don't want to go home." Aizawa shook his head,

"No...I should head home. I'm sure Eriko needs help with the baby." He turned to Dad, "Goodnight, Chief."

"Sleep well, you two," Dad looked down at Light, "Ready to go?" His brow furrowed as he saw Light's expression. This was it. This was the moment he had been waiting for all day to talk to Dad, "What's wrong?"

"Nothing," Light replied, "Just a little hungry."

"Did you not eat?"

"I guess I was too focused on the case." Dad shrugged,

"Do you want to stop for dinner before we head home?" Light nodded, and they headed to the car. And Light's breath caught in his throat. How was he going to ask about what he had learned?

It ended up being a very innocent, "So what was growing up in America like?"

Dad froze completely as he went pale, and he slowly turned to Light with complete shock on his face when they were stopped in traffic.

"How...?"

"I did a little investigation and found the photo in your desk." He looked to Dad, "You didn't answer my question."

"Light..." he sighed, "I know you're probably assuming the worst—"

"Dad, I'm just asking a question. I'm not assuming you're a bad person, I just want to know since I kind of thought America was only known for bombing us and then rebuilding to have more control after making our Emperor renounce divinity."

"I'm sure there's more to it," Dad replied, "But given the nonsense I grew up with, that's not entirely wrong. I think we should talk about this over dinner so I can focus on the road right now."

They sat in silence, and Light asked, "Does Mom know?"

"Yes. That's why I've asked you to give your mother a chance. If she was able to accept me after she lost her grandfather to the Hiroshima bomb, she just needed a little time to come around about Ryuk." They stopped at a restaurant and got a table quickly, and Dad sat down with Light, "I will say, I'm a little surprised you didn't figure it out sooner," he teased, "I know I have used American terms before, and it's rubbed off on your mother."

"Well, I thought it was just a family thing," Light replied, quickly asking the waitress for some water and then leaning forward and ready to learn about his father.

Dad caught onto this quickly, "So you want to know what growing up was like? It was hell. I grew up in a small, bigoted town where the police would shoot anyone Asian or of color just for existing."

Light's eyes widened, "Seriously?!" Dad nodded,

"Yes. As long as you didn't look or act the part of anything related to your culture, you were safe. My name was shortened to 'Chiro' for most of my life to hide my heritage, and thankfully my more Japanese features only became more noticable as I was in my teen years." He rubbed the back of his neck, "After looking at all the injustice of fearing for my life just because of where my family came from, I knew I would never be able to make a change in America. I decided to stay with my grandmother in Japan throughout college and do my best to hide where I came from." He shrugged, "There's not much to say. The thing is, Light, before Ryuk showed up, your mother and I had been planning to shelter you and keep you safe so you would never have to deal with anything close to what I did."

"I'm sorry, Dad," Light whispered, "That sounds awful."

"It was, and leaving was the best choice I have ever made." He relaxed, "I'm happy here. It's not perfect at all, but being able to walk

down the street without fear of being murdered by police is nice." He leaned forward, "But Light, there is something I learned while living in America that you have to understand, especially if you decide to become a police officer. I have already taught Aizawa and Ide about this, but you have to be careful with allegations. There were many times in America where people of color were arrested just because law enforcement was racist. When you were younger, you asked me why we didn't just kill all criminals, and that is why, Light. What if someone has been falsely accused for a reason as foolish as people being mad about their skin color or culture? Is that fair?"

Light slumped, "It's not. Why are people like that?"

"One of humanity's greatest mysteries," Dad replied somberly, "It will never make sense." He shrugged, "When I was talking to my family a few months ago, it's gotten a bit better. And I know most of America was not nearly as bigoted as that town I grew up in, or if they were, they wised up eventually. Of course, that doesn't excuse the fact African Americans had to use lower quality everything and were segregated from everyone else when I was younger than Sayu." Light winced,

"That's so strange." He looked to Ryuk, "Right, Ryuk?" Even Ryuk seemed mildly disturbed by what Dad was explaining.

Dad ran a hand through his hair, "It keeps me awake sometimes, but there's something my mother told me when I was younger that helps."

"What did she say?"

"You have no control who lives, who dies, or who tells your story."

"Wise woman," Ryuk chuckled, "Humans can hardly control their fate."

"However," Dad added, "Even though Mother is correct, that doesn't mean we can't always do our best to make the world better for everyone else. Even if I can't control anything, I can do the best I can to make a positive impact."

Light nodded, and he knew then what he wanted to do with his life, "I want to be able to change the world. I want to work in the government so I can change laws and make sure nobody in Japan ever suffers like you did in America."

Dad beamed, "I always knew you'd change the world, Light," he nudged him a bit, "Even if you are already showing promise as a

detective." Light shrugged,

"Maybe I'm just talented."

Ryuk and Dad both nodded.

OoOoO

L looked at the news reports of Light Yagami, an eleven-year-old, being crucial assistance for solving a murder case after graduating high school a few weeks prior.

He had been keeping an eye on this kid for years now, and he was increasingly interesting as time went by. But so far, there was nothing he could find that suggested the floating apple in the recording he still had was something tied to this child at all.

B had teased him that the kid had had psychic abilities, but L just did not feel this was right. Then he would feel strange for being so fascinated by this child, but it wasn't like he had any intention of meeting this boy, so it wasn't *that* weird. Besides, bringing Light to Wammy's House like Watari had suggested many times would hinder any investigation since Light would be on guard.

As of now, he was content to see from a distance how Light grew up, and maybe then he would open an unofficial investigation when Light was an adult and more likely to slip up after years of being confident.

No matter how long it took, he was going to figure out what was happening with the floating apple and how it related to Light Yagami.

# Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

Date is July 2005

Light checked out a few books on law from the library. Absently flipping through the pages to make sure he hadn't read this one already, he glanced up and noticed Yamamoto laughing with his girlfriend, Miho. He sighed, looking away and trying not to think about the long-lasting crush he had had on Yamamoto.

Ryuk had told him for years to just admit his feelings, and Light found he was grateful his long-time friend had a girlfriend. That way, he knew for sure before putting himself out there like that. Even at sixteen, Light knew full well that it was already a risk to be gay if he wanted to be a politician and change laws.

Though he was grateful for age because finally, everyone else was preparing for the entrance exams. Since graduating high school, Light had spent the last five years winning awards in fencing and tennis before focusing on his law studies. Even before taking the entrance exams, he already had universities around the world begging him to attend. He could go anywhere he wanted to with a full scholarship.

If he wanted to stay close, he would attend To-Oh University, but he was thinking about Harvard if he wanted to focus on law. Still, he was less than keen on spending time in America after the stories Dad had told him about growing up in America. Dad had also said the town he grew up in was small, so it probably wasn't as racist everywhere else, but for now, Light was going to avoid taking the risk. That meant his next best options were Oxford or Cambridge in the United Kingdom.

He sat down was Yamamoto and Miho, pulling out a chemistry textbook, "So we're studying chemistry today, right?"

Ryuk examined the textbook, "I still don't understand how you humans find any meaning in a bunch of letters and lines. You're telling me H2O means water?" Light absently nodded to respond to the Shinigami and helped Miho with chemical compounds she didn't understand.

At least she was a sweet girl, and he was fairly certain they would be happy together for a long time. That was best for Yamamoto, and

Light knew he had to get over his crush. He just needed a little time. The most important thing was for Yamamoto to be happy, even if it wasn't with Light.

When the library closed, Light checked out his books and put them in his messenger bag, texting Matsuda that he would bring coffee. It was getting harder to see his best friend now that Matsuda was an officer, so Light had gotten in the habit of bringing coffee.

But on his way to get coffee, he screamed as he was pulled into a dark section of the park, a knife to his throat and blindfold covering his eyes.

"Don't struggle and I won't kill you yet," a male voice hissed into his ear, and Light whimpered as he realized that his attacker was much stronger than he was.

He knew better than to think Ryuk would save him. They had discussed that it may be a rule with Shinigami to not save humans, as they had theorized when Ryuk mentioned a few years ago the Shinigami that had said "nice knowing you" when Light was a baby. They had mutually decided that in a life-or-death situation such as this, Ryuk would not save him.

Deciding he might as well try to fight back since he might have an opening, he headbutt the attacker, which loosed the grip on his wrists enough for him to slip free and make a run for it, shouting at the top of his lungs for someone to help him.

Knowing now he could assist, Ryuk grabbed Light's waist and began to take off, only for the attacker to move at superhuman speed and grab Light's ankle, pulling him from Ryuk's grip and slamming him back onto the ground.

Light struggled for air desperately or make himself move to get away again. All he could manage to do was tremble as the attacker looked down at him. Was it the lighting, or were his eyes actually glowing red?

"So, you really can fly." He hoisted Light up and put handcuffs on him, "I'll take note of that." He stuffed a gag in Light's mouth, "I was going to be nice, but after that little stunt you pulled, I'd guess not." He stepped hard on Light's foot to keep him from fighting back or taking off, and with a blow to the head, Light was out cold.

...

Ryuk was helpless to watch as this attacker hoisted the unconscious Light up and tossed him in the back of a car.

That person was *not* human, and that brought Ryuk more fear than he had experienced before. Because if this person wasn't human, that meant Light could actually be killed by whoever this was!

Suddenly Ryuk understood that rule the old man put in place a little over twenty years ago about no having intercourse with humans. This creature must have been the byproduct of it.

He couldn't help but wonder what this creature was. Was he a half-Shinigami? Was there a name for that? Was it hanyou? Or was he thinking about that anime, *Inuyasha,* that Light had taken to watching with Sayu?

Regardless, he would be able to find Light no matter what, but he had to inform Light's friends and family about him being abducted. He took off to the police station and found Matsuda, Aizawa, and Ide. With them were two other officers, Mogi and Ukita, but Ryuk didn't care about that as he began writing down on a piece of paper for them to see.

"What the hell?!" Ukita asked, and Aizawa looked in the general direction of Ryuk, completely unphased as he read the letter.

"Light's been kidnapped?!" All the officers jerked up and ran to Soichiro, with Mogi silently concerned and Ukita pleading with his mentor for an explanation about what was with the flying note and what it had to do with Light.

Soichiro stood up when all of them barreled in, and it was all a mess of shouting and confusion, "Kids, calm down and explain what's going on."

After Matsuda explained Ryuk had informed them Light had been abducted, Soichiro sighed and turned to Mogi and Ukita.

"I suppose you both deserve an explanation. But you have to swear to me you will keep it a secret. Aizawa, Ide, and Matsuda would have kept it one if Ryuk hadn't appeared here."

"Ryuk?" Mogi asked softly, and Soichiro sighed, explaining everything about how Light had been possessed ever since he was a baby, and Ryuk was his companion. It was unclear if Ryuk gave Light supernatural abilities or was just a force in his life, and he was a regular human, but this had been something the others had known about for well over ten years for varying reasons.

Mogi and Ukita blinked a few times and turned to the other officers as though begging for someone to tell them the superintendent was kidding. Ryuk chuckled. That response was much more what he had desired from Shuichi, but no, even as a teenager, he hadn't given a damn.

"It's true," Matsuda was the one to say, "Still don't know if Light can fly or if Ryuk is carrying him. I *think* Ryuk carries him."

"So Light's just been possessed this whole time." Ukita stared at the ground as though his whole life was a lie, "Are we sure we need to rescue him, or if he'll just free himself?"

"No," Soichiro ran his hands through his hair, "If Ryuk is revealing himself for this, it's something serious. Ryuk, are you still here?"

Ryuk picked up a pen, and Matsuda crossed his arms with a pout, "I wish I had brought the Oujia board I normally use to talk to Ryuk." Mogi looked at Matsuda as though he was insane.

Soichiro focused on his breathing to keep from having a panic attack, hearing what had happened to his son. "Can you show us where Light is? Do you know who took him?"

Ryuk wrote down, "Not fully human. Light shouldn't be able to die for a while, but I don't know if this hanyou can change that."

Ide read over the level, "Great, so we're fighting the supernatural again," he looked to Aizawa, "Just like the good old days. I wonder if we'll have to battle more flying meatloaf."

Ukita fainted.

Aizawa looked down at his passed-out apprentice, "He'll be fine. Anyways, we have to find Light before all else. Can you tell us where he is, Ryuk?"

Ryuk thought about it. Could he? He didn't know addresses or anything, and he couldn't exactly lead them anywhere without

exposing Light's secret any further.

Soichiro got up and began pacing, shaking his hands in the air to calm himself down, "I doubt Ryuk can. Ryuk, go check on Light and come back here if he's injured. We'll figure out something," he glanced at Mogi, "This is a secret, you can't tell anyone." Mogi nodded, and Aizawa was moving Ukita to the couch,

"He'll be quiet too. Don't worry, Chief."

Satisfied, Ryuk took off to where he sensed Light was, letting himself focus on how interesting it would be to see a half-breed in the flesh. He hadn't even thought this was a real thing.

OoOoO

When Light woke up, it was with a pounding headache as he processed his surroundings. The first thing he noticed was the fact he was chained up completely. He looked down at the iron chains, as well as the iron ball connected to his foot, most likely to keep him from flying away.

Thankfully, he wasn't blindfolded, so he got a look around what seemed to be a surprisingly clean section of a warehouse. He stood up, estimating if he could move far with the ball and chain, which was way heavier than he had expected.

He noticed Ryuk, who replied, "I called the officers, they're going to help you out. I also may have exposed your secret to two new officers." Light's eyes widened at that, but he forced himself to remain calm. He couldn't give any indication he was talking to someone.

"You're finally awake," Light snapped up and saw a figure emerge from the shadows, a knife in hand. "I was beginning to wonder if I gave you brain damage." He gestured to the chains, "Yeah, you're not going anywhere any time soon."

"Wanna bet?" Light teased, looking his kidnapper up and down judgementally, "You know, I think I expected more. So are you going to go on your whole speech about why you're doing this and why me? You clearly chose me for a reason."

The stranger hummed, playing with the butcher knife in his hands, "You are a clever one. L clearly has his eye on you for a reason."

"L?!" Light asked, examining the stranger's eyes that glowed bright red when he was in the dark but were otherwise not at all different from Light's own red-brown eye color, "Why would L be interested in me?"

"Around ten years ago," the stranger explained, "He found some footage of you making an apple float with your mind. Ever since then, he's grown fascinated by the very idea of you, determined to discover what you are. Well," he pulled at Light's chains. "What better way to get his attention that to capture the object of his curiosity? Maybe I'll figure out what you are before he does."

Light hesitated, "I'd tell you I'm just a regular person, but you saw me fly, so I doubt you'll believe that."

"Clever boy," he grabbed Light's chin, shining a flashlight in his eyes, making him wince with his headache. "You don't have eyes like mine, but you can fly and carry objects with your mind. But you still don't have a lifespan."

"What are you talking about?" Light asked, and the stranger blinked,

"You truly have no idea what I'm talking about? Perhaps you're not as much like me as I thought." He turned away, "Well, no matter, now that you're conscious, I have matters to attend to. Oh, and don't think you can pull any magic on me," he gestured to a camera Light hadn't noticed until now, "I'll catch it all. So be good, will you?" He had a knife mere inches from Light's throat, "I won't hesitate to kill you."

Light smirked at the knife. Even though he noticed Ryuk was concerned, he knew he would be fine. This stranger could doubtfully override the lifespan Light had determined was fairly long, and even if he somehow could, he needed Light alive if he truly wanted to surpass L. Still, he remained silent just in case, and the stranger turned to leave, but before he did, Light called to him, "Hey, can I at least get a name for you?"

His kidnapper turned, "You can call me Beyond Birthday."

OoOoO

Watari came in with an envelope while L was looking for more cases to busy himself with, "L, you need to take a look at this." He handed L the envelope, and L's eyes widened when he saw the contents.

It was just a photo of Light Yagami chained up in an unknown location, clearly unconscious. On the back, there was writing.

*"I've got him."*

*- Beyond Birthday*

L's blood ran cold. He regretted mentioning anything to B years ago about his interest in the Yagami boy. In the last two years, he had begun to wonder if the footage that had sparked his curiosity was some sort of lag from the recording since there had been no signs of anything else abnormal. But now that Light was in danger, L's interest was spiked again as he looked to Watari.

"Contact Superintendant Yagami and let him know I will be working on this investigation."

Even as he said it, L wondered if it was sick, but he wondered if the kidnapping was exactly the thing to expose any supernatural abilities Light Yagami may have.

*We'll have to wait and see.*

# Chapter 18

Perhaps the kidnapper hadn't expected this to be as easy as it was. The moment the crossword puzzle was delivered, L was already on the case and had called the NPA to assist, explaining he had been personally contacted and challenged by this kidnapper, who he only called B.

Well, whoever B was, Matsuda didn't particularly care. What he did care about was his best friend had been kidnapped. In the place where he had been abducted, there were only Light's bag and three Wara Ningyo dolls, and thus the Wara Ningyo task force was formed to solve this case, all of which being officers who knew Light's secret.

The crossword puzzle was incredibly difficult, and Matsuda tore at his hair in frustration, wondering how the others were keeping it together. After less than five minutes of brainstorming, Soichiro noticed it was an address, which L confirmed, and they rushed over to where the address was.

Only it wasn't the building Light was being held captive in. With sinking dread, they realized this was just a random man by the name of Byakuya Banno. Whether this was a red herring or not, he was brought into protective custody.

From there, it seemed everything went out the window for B, that the officers were able to actually solve the crossword puzzle and get there before this man could be a victim.

At least, that was what they thought until Byakuya died of a heart attack out of nowhere.

"What the hell?!" Aizawa shouted, and all the officers looked at one another in a panic. So was this a coincidence, or were they truly up against something supernatural far more dangerous than Light and Ryuk?

L didn't seem too concerned, *"How interesting. So it seems he wasn't insane."*

"What do you mean?" Matsuda asked, and L explained,

*"The culprit of Light Yagami's kidnapping is someone I grew up with. He would tell me how he could know the exact moment someone would die*

*just by looking at them."*

"Ah, lovely," Ukita groaned, "Any other supernatural happenings we need to know about?"

"Not for now," Soichiro replied, "At least, I don't believe so." He sat down, with his head in his hands, "We're going to find Light," he whispered mostly to himself, "He's okay. He's okay."

"Chief..." Matsuda sat down beside him, looking around to see Aizawa and Ide were also extremely concerned, "Come on, guys! This is Light we're talking about. He's probably halfway through escaping on his own right now!"

...

After sitting around in chains for a while, Light found himself bored and decided to bust out. He knew he couldn't have Ryuk's help because of the camera, so he had two choices.

He eyed the screws keeping his shackles attached to the wall, and he dug into a tear in his jeans' pocket that obscure change often fell into, and he found a coin, which with a little force put onto it, allowed him to unscrew the chains from the wall.

When he was free, the first course of action was to disable the camera, and he looked around before looking down at the chains still attached to his wrists and then the ball and chain.

"You know, Ryuk," he looked up to the Shinigami, "Remember when I asked you if I could learn magic in my own right, and you said you'd ask the King about it eventually? Can you go do that? I'm not keen on being kidnapped and you being unable to help me."

Ryuk laughed, "I had a feeling this conversation would come up again. I'll go ask him once you're out of this, Light-o."

"No, I think you can go now," Light replied, "You can't save my life anyway, and if L truly does know something about me having supernatural abilities, I have to be careful to not get his attention."

"But haven't you always wanted to get L's attention?"

"Yeah, but not like that." He shooed Ryuk away, "Go check on my father, and then go ask the King. I'll be fine."

Ryuk hesitated, before nodding, "Alright." He took off, and Light decided to look around, picking up the iron ball and wincing at the weight. Was there sand in this damn thing?! Despite all the sports he had played, he was not strong enough to keep that up for long.

He noticed a kitchen, and after dragging the ball there, he grabbed a pot with a hole in it, a somewhat slippery cutting board, and a bungee cord. Putting the ball in the pot and dragging it with the bungee cord made movement less of a pain.

The next place he looked was a large curtain, which he opened and gasped softly when he realized this wasn't a warehouse at all. He had begun to realize that once he got up, but this was an incredibly spacious studio apartment high enough up that for him to jump off the balcony would spell certain death. Wonderful.

He considered screaming for help, but one look at the far door with some sort of contraption designed for if it opened, he decided that wasn't the best idea. From the looks of the trap, it would set the room on fire if the door was opened, and of all the ways to die, burning to death was one of the worst options.

Light took deep breaths to calm himself down. There was no need to panic. The most important course of action was to get this ball and chain off. He sat down on the floor, investigating the lock that was already digging into his skin. This didn't seem too hard, but it was certainly going to be far more challenging to remove from himself than it would be for someone else to remove it.

Groaning, he got to work.

OoOoO

Ryuk flew back to the Shinigami Realm and was surprised he was allowed to see the King immediately upon arrival. Normally doing so took forever because unless Ryuk brought apples, the King was questioning if he wanted to bother seeing him.

"I know why you're here, Ryuk," the King said, "It's about teaching the

human magic. I'm sure the half-breed abducting him is less than favorable for you."

Ryuk shrugged, "I'm sure he'll be fine, but I did come to ask about that. It's not in the rules we aren't allowed to, but given what often happens when a human does learn magic..."

"You are permitted to teach him."

Ryuk snapped up, "Really? That easily?"

The King appeared before him instead of hiding in the cave's shadows, "Everyone around here is keeping an eye on your experiment and its promising results. Teaching a human child to have the mindset of a Shinigami, and granting him power of his own, and we may be able to return this realm to its former glory."

Ryuk paused, not having thought about that at all. "So are you saying this is going to become a common thing?"

"We'll see how the human you care for fares, and determine how to act from there." The King turned away before pausing, "Of course, I am only permitting you to assist in getting him out of his current predicament, as that half-breed was never meant to exist."

Now, that was by no means something he had expected to hear. He was allowed to save Light? "So it really is a rule we are not allowed to save the lives of humans and not just a gut feeling?"

"Correct." He began to disappear, "I would return to your human now, Ryuk, because he is about to land himself in mortal peril."

Hearing those words, Ryuk rushed back, figuring the best bet was to figure out addresses and tell the officers where Light was. He didn't hear the other Shinigami considering what Ryuk's experiment had taught them and the possibilities of messing around in the human world themselves.

OoOoO

After an hour of trying, Light finally got the chain off his foot. He winced at the marks around his ankle from where it had rubbed his

skin raw, then considered a way to get himself out of here.

He didn't have much time, however, as he heard a voice behind him. "Looks like you've been busy since I left." Light blanched as he turned around and saw Beyond Birthday had somehow gotten to the balcony despite how high up it was.

Light instantly jumped back, realizing he was unarmed besides the chains still around his wrists that he supposed he could swing around and smack him.

Beyond Birthday laughed, but it was deranged and bordering on a sob, "Looks like your police officer friends are smarter than I thought, ruining this whole set up! But no matter, I can still make sure you and I die together." He dove at Light, who dodged, using the chains like a whip and striking his kidnapper across the chest, stepping back and trying to run to the kitchen for a knife.

He screamed in pain as he felt something hard get thrown at his leg, and he crumpled to the ground, realizing the forgotten iron ball had been thrown at him, and something in his lower leg was definitely broken. Light managed to grab a knife from a drawer, stabbing it into Beyond Birthday's wrist as he reached for the chains. Beyond Birthday hissed but didn't seem largely concerned as he picked Light up by the chains and dangled him over the balcony's railing.

Light looked down, the gravity of his situation sinking in for the first time. He had never feared heights before since, with Ryuk's help, he had been able to fly, but now? Now it didn't matter that he knew he would die eventually; the notion it would happen so soon was terrifying.

He didn't let any of this appear on his face, though, and he noticed there were familiar cars below, and he let that freak him out. The door was still rigged!

Beyond Birthday turned as though he heard something, "Looks like we're going to have some company. But how did they find you so fast?"

Light just forced himself to smirk as the door was thrown open, and he instantly recognized Dad was one of the first, shouting, "Light!"

Beyond Birthday laughed, but it was far closer to Ryuk than any human Light had heard. "Looks like your friends found you, Yagami. And in record time, too."

Light noticed the trap had gone off and was in the process of activating, "Dad! Guys! The door's rigged—get out while you can!"

Beyond Birthday gave an odd little giggle, "Your choice, officers. Attempt to arrest me and all of us die, or leave and just let the two of us go down." He shook the chain, removing one of his fingers from the grip, "Don't think I won't drop him."

Light trembled as he looked down again, estimating some things, and then back at his friends who were about to go and arrest Beyond Birthday. They had protective coverings on for a proper raid, hopefully... "I have no intention of being a bargaining tool! Guys, go!" He lifted his good leg and kicked Beyond Birthday, causing his grip on the chain to fall.

Light plummeted, and he saw the explosion above and noticed Dad at the balcony, seeming stunned but relatively unharmed, screaming his name and reaching for him.

He could accept death right now and crash to the ground. However, he wasn't particularly keen on doing that just yet and grabbed for a railing to a lower balcony he had correctly estimated being able to reach. He grabbed on, managing to hook the chain, yelping at the jolt of pain in his shoulder, but that wasn't the priority as he saw it had hooked on even though his grip was slipping. He wasn't falling to his death.

Then the chain began to slip.

*No! No, no, no, no, no! I won't die like this!*

He felt a sudden weight off of him and turned to see Ryuk was holding onto him and making sure the chain stayed in place.

"It's okay," Ryuk assured him, "I won't let you fall."

"But you can't—"

"I got permission. We're fine."

"Light!" Light looked up and saw Dad a few floors up, "Are you alright?"

"Yeah!" He shouted back, "I won't fall, but I would appreciate some assistance!" He felt tears welling up in his eyes as he processed the pain he was in and the fear he hadn't let himself think about before.

Ryuk pet Light's hair to comfort him, "Old Man also said I can teach you magic. Nothing like this will happen again."

Light sighed in relief and brightened when Matsuda was at the balcony he was stuck at to pull him up, "Matsuda! You're alright!"

Matsuda nodded, "Yeah. Of the officers with protection, Aizawa took the brunt of the damage. He's unconscious, but everyone else is stunned and a little sore at worst." He hoisted Light up with Ryuk's help, and Light leaned into his friend's grip, letting himself cry. "Shhh, it's okay, Light. You're safe now." He scooped Light into his arms, "I'm not going to let anything hurt you."

He brought Light to where two ambulances were waiting, one with Aizawa out cold with Ide by his side and the other with Beyond Birthday, who was also out cold and was badly burned.

Dad was also waiting and immediately took Light from Matsuda, pulling him close with tears, "I thought we lost you."

"I'm not going anywhere, Dad," he whispered as he was brought into the ambulance. "Don't worry." He glanced over at Aizawa, "Is he going to be okay?"

"Most likely," one of the paramedics assured him, "It's just a few burns and a concussion." She came over to look him over, noticing his broken leg quickly, and Light could tell by looking that this was not at all a clean break, and the bone had shattered in multiple areas.

Dad pulled him close, wrapping a shock blanket around him, in an embrace with Ryuk. Light sighed with relief. Everything would be okay.

OoOoO

When Light came back to reality, he quickly realized he was in a hospital room from the plain white walls and ceiling. He wondered for a few moments why he felt so drowsy and sat up, seeing his heavily bandaged leg and flowers and gifts around the room. It slowly came back to him what had happened and the doctor mentioning he needed to have leg surgery due to how severe the break and muscle tearing was so he didn't lose the use of his leg completely.

He didn't have much time to process it before Sayu was rocketing at him, "You're awake! You're up!"

Light struggled to breathe through her iron grip, whispering "Room... getting... dark..." to make her let go. He looked around and noticed Mother was there as well, relief painted all over her face.

He remembered five years when he had finally talked to her about how he knew she blamed Ryuk for Aunt Claudia's death, and he understood she just wanted a normal kid, but he was never going to change himself to please someone else.

It had caught her off guard, but after that, they seemed to understand each other far more, and Mother was more open to talking to him and acting like his mother. It didn't undo the damage done most of his life, but he was willing to forgive her, even if he never forgot the reason that he still referred to Ryuk as "Mom" instead of her.

"Where's Dad?" He asked, and Ryuk was the one to answer, overlapping with Sayu,

"Off giving your kidnapper a piece of his mind."

Sayu winked, "Oh, by the way, Yamamoto came by," she nudged him, handing him a bouquet of Asagao flowers. "Wanted me to give you these in case he wasn't here when you woke up."

Yamamoto had gotten him flowers? He grinned at that, taking the flowers, trying to remind himself it was totally platonic. Mother seemed to catch onto his expression,

"He was very worried about you, especially after hearing about the kidnapping."

"How did it get out that quickly?" Light asked, "I was only kidnapped for like two days, right?" Had someone seen the kidnapping and the flying?!

"Matsuda freaked out and texted me," Sayu explained, "And I told your friends to help us look for you. From there, it was all over the city by nightfall. You hungry?"

Light's stomach growled loudly in response, and Mother smiled,

"How about Sayu and I go get you something to eat. I'm sure your father and friends would like to see you a well." Light nodded and

watched them go and turned to Ryuk,

"Hey, I've been meaning to ask you. Beyond Birthday mentioned something about eyes. What was with that?"

Ryuk grimaced, "Oh. That. There's this deal you can make for half your lifespan in exchange for the eyes of a Shinigami, allowing you to see someone's name and lifespan by looking at them. But you don't need those, so don't worry about it."

"Does that mean Beyond Birthday had a notebook?"

"No, one of my older siblings is his father," Ryuk replied casually, "And I think if I asked around I could figure out which one and inform him that his brat was freaking out and to go fix that."

Light blinked, "So...Beyond Birthday's your nephew?" Did that mean the crazy kidnapper was basically his cousin?

"Yeah, and it was news to me too," Ryuk laughed, "No wonder the Old Man made a rule against sleeping with humans. I thought it was just an 'ew, no' kind of thing." Light snorted, laughing,

"So you have no illegitimate children running around that I should know about?"

"Nope!"

Light sighed in relief, putting the flowers on the nightstand. He heard a knock on the door, frowning at who could be knocking. For a split second, he feared it was Beyond Birthday here to finish him off, but given Dad was off giving him a piece of his mind, he doubted that, plus the burns wouldn't permit him to do so.

"Uh...come in?"

The door opened, and a man Light had never seen before came in, but immediately he thought this man was strikingly similar physically to Beyond Birthday. However, if Beyond Birthday was a copy, this man was the original. He didn't seem to be that much older than Light, and he eyed Light curiously.

"Hello, Light Yagami," he said, "I think it's time we spoke in person."

Light suspected who this person was, something about him just screamed his identity to the world, but he still asked, "And you are?"

"I am L."

# Chapter 19

Light gaped at the world's greatest detective, who was sitting at his bedside. What do you say to someone like this? *L* had just sat down with him.

He examined the detective. He was definitely at least five years older. But all things considered, Light had expected an adult. He did the math in his head from when he had first seen L ten years ago. Did that mean L had only been a preteen at the time?!

He didn't realize he was gaping until L spoke, "I must say, I am impressed you managed to escape your restraints on your own."

Light blinked before remembering to speak, "Oh! Yeah," he rubbed the back of his neck, "It wasn't too hard." He looked down at his leg, "Would have been better if that guy *didn't* throw the ball and chain into my leg." This was not going to be pleasant, but he decided to count his blessings that he had been given surgery almost immediately, so he had already been out cold by the time his adrenaline fully wore off.

L chuckled, and Light noticed he wanted to say something, and then he did. "Light Yagami, I feel I should apologize for your abduction." Light cocked his head,

"Why? You had nothing to do with it."

"On the contrary," L replied, "The man who kidnapped you is called Beyond Birthday, formerly B. He grew up in the same orphanage I did, and we have known each other for an incredibly long time, and he was fully aware I've been keeping an eye on you for a decade." Light's eyes widened,

"Why?"

L pulled out his computer and showed Light a recording. He immediately recognized his younger self and was able to pinpoint exactly when this was.

He watched the apple float out of the basket and then disappear behind Dad's back.

*Oh...shit.*

L moved his laptop off to the side, "I would have thought that to be a computer glitch, albeit a strange one, until I did more research into you." He didn't need to say anything else. Light knew the detective suspected his secret.

He sighed, "You want me to tell you what exactly I am, right? Like superpowers or whatever." L nodded, and Light leaned back in bed, "Mother's already taken me to exorcists and psychics and whatever. Ever since I was a baby, weird things happen around me, but nobody knows what." He knew it was pointless to lie to such a brilliant man; something would give him away, despite having mastered how to deceive others to maintain his secret.

L put his thumb to his lips, deep in thought for a few moments. "And I would assume the task force who assisted me in rescuing you knows about this as well."

"Probably," Light replied, "I've known a few of them my whole life." He laughed, "I'm positive Aizawa and Ide have stories."

"Hm." L seemed to contemplate this, "You don't know either... this is very interesting, Light." Light sat up, smirking,

"You were hoping I'd have an answer like how I'm some sort of magical being, right?" He rolled his eyes, "You've been wanting to talk to me for years, haven't you."

"Yes," L admitted, "You are exceptionally gifted, so even despite the happenings around you, it was inevitable I would talk with you at some point."

"I suppose you're right," he turned on his side, wincing as he tried to adjust his leg, "So, what do I call you? Is it just L?"

Ryuk began laughing, and Light's eyes widened slightly as he knew full well that the laughter was Ryuk unintentionally telling him that yes, L's name was actually L.

L cocked his head a bit, "You can call me Ryuzaki."

L Ryuzaki? Light doubted that was the detective's name, but that was what he would consider L's name until future notice. He grinned,

"Well, it's nice to meet you, Ryuzaki. I've considered looking for you for a while." L smirked a bit,

"And I don't doubt you would have found me." He softened a bit, "You know, if you're interested, I may be able to offer you a job." Light perked up,

"A job? But I haven't taken the entrance exams for university yet."

"You wouldn't have to," L replied simply, "But if you are interested, you are welcome to join me on cases, where I send you the information and you can assist."

"Oh?" He thought about it. It was no secret L's job paid well, and it would be nice to be working in some way, especially since he couldn't walk right now.

But he thought about his secret. He had told L that he didn't know why weird occurrences happened, but if he spent more time with the detective, that would inevitably be exposed as a lie. He felt like tearing out his hair as he was being given the offer of a lifetime to work alongside the greatest detective in the world, and now for the first time, his secret was getting in the way of something he truly wanted.

So he decided to reply with, "I'd love to. Really, I want to accept this. But..." he rubbed the back of his neck, "I don't think I'm ready. Not yet, at least. I'm still sixteen, and I want to focus on recovering from surgery and getting my life back together, determine what university I want to go to before I take a job that could eventually involve traveling." He grinned, "Can you ask me again maybe when I'm eighteen?"

L seemed shocked for a moment before softening. He handed Light a piece of paper with an email address, "Whenever you're ready, just let me know."

Ryuk gaped, "Didn't think you'd do that, Light-o. You've been dreaming of meeting L for years."

They were interrupted by Yamamoto barging in, pausing for a moment upon seeing L. Light wasn't sure if he was seeing things or not, but it was as though his childhood friend was momentarily jealous seeing L's hand on Light's.

"Who's this?" Yamamoto asked politely, and L stood up,

"I'm Ryuzaki, one of the detectives on the task force to rescue him. I heard he underwent surgery and wanted to make sure he was alright.

I was just leaving." He turned back to Light, "I hope you have a smooth recovery, Light-Kun. I'll inform your father that you're awake."

Light nodded, waving goodbye, "Bye, Ryuzaki!" He was then crushed into a hug by Yamamoto, who pulled him close. His breathing was shaky as though trying not to cry.

"I thought I lost you. I saw you fall on the news and—"

"I'm okay," Light promised, melting into the embrace and trying to calm his racing heart. He reached over and grabbed the flowers, "I got your flowers. I love them."

...

Ryuk smiled fondly, seeing his surrogate son with the boy he'd had a crush on for years. The Shinigami could not even begin to describe the relief that had washed over him when the King gave him permission to protect Light and teach him magic.

When humans learned magic, they could achieve a God's status and obtain immortality of their own. This way, Light would be able to protect himself, and the fun between the two of them would never have to end.

His main concern was how Light would react to that. He had lived with the crushing knowledge of his own mortality since he was an infant, so for Ryuk to tell him that he alone could live forever should he desire was bound to be strange.

But he would tell Light about that part when it was convenient. For now, Light could believe he was just a human learning supernatural abilities.

OoOoO

Yamamoto stayed with Light for the next few weeks when he got home from the hospital, willing to help him while his friends in the

NPA were at work or, in the case of Aizawa, on leave due to a serious concussion with Ide helping care for him.

Dad came by when he could, but the issue regarding Beyond Birthday was a serious one since he was healing pretty quickly, and there was concern about him escaping. Not to mention he had made himself a legal American citizen to ensure America would butt their heads in about imprisoning or executing one of their citizens.

Despite the new information that Ryuk could protect him when Beyond Birthday was involved, and the kidnapper was basically his cousin, Light still found himself unable to sleep at night, terrified Beyond Birthday would come through the window and take him again.

He didn't even know why he was so afraid. He had long since accepted he was just a human and would die eventually, but Ryuk could protect him. Why did the idea of Beyond Birthday coming back for him strike so much terror into him? Perhaps it was because he was truly helpless this time since he needed a wheelchair at the moment.

Yamamoto had picked up on this quickly and had stayed with him since. Light knew it would make no difference for someone like Beyond Birthday, but he felt safe in the arms of his longtime crush as Yamamoto held onto him and coaxed him out of nightmares. Nightmares were perfectly normal, Light knew this from the books he had read, but they were irritating all the same.

"When's school starting for you?" He asked sleepily, and Yamamoto shrugged,

"Next week." He adjusted his grip on Light so he could grab the remote, "Do you want to watch a movie?"

Light yawned, "What about Miho? You haven't seen her in a while."

"Um..." Yamamoto tensed, "We...might have broken up a few weeks ago."

"What? When?!" He pulled himself out of Yamamoto's embrace, hugging a pillow and waiting to hear what happened. Perhaps it was strange to want to know the details of Yamamoto's breakup, but he was curious.

Yamamoto rubbed the back of his neck, laughing awkwardly, "Uh...my heart just wasn't really in it, and I didn't want to lead her on as soon

as I realized that, and the idea of losing you was the most painful thing I could imagine." He shrugged, "She was angry, but I think it would have been worse if I dragged things out after realizing my heart belonged to someone else."

Light's eyes widened, trying not to get his hopes up with what he was hearing. He barely understood social cues beyond how to manipulate someone for the sake of keeping his secret. He subtly pinched himself.

"Someone else?" He asked meekly, trying to keep the hope out of his voice as he eyed the flowers that were in a vase on his desk.

"Yeah..." Yamamoto was looking down, "Someone else?"

"Do I know this person?"

Yamamoto laughed softly, "I would certainly hope so. Light..." he looked Light directly in the eye, and Light noticed a rosy shade of pink on Yamamoto's cheeks, "Will you go on a date with me?"

"Yes," the word tumbled out of Light's lips before he could even think to stop them, flying at Yamamoto in an embrace, "Yes, I will go on a date with you."

They stayed like that for a while, giggling like the teenagers they were, and Light buried his face in Yamamoto's chest, unable to believe the crush that for years he had believed was unrequited actually wasn't.

Yamamoto got up, "I'm going to get some more food from downstairs, alright?" Light nodded, beaming.

Ryuk cocked his head at Light, "So when are you going to tell him about me?"

Light's happy bubble was popped with those words, and realizing that he hadn't told Yamamoto anything about his secret for ten years, and there was a very good reason why.

It wasn't that he didn't trust Yamamoto, but Yamamoto's parents were very traditional and by-the-book on Christianity. Dad's own family had been Catholic and much more lenient in basically everything in a town where cold-blooded murder by the police was considered normal. Dad didn't care whatsoever about Light's sexuality or him being possessed. However, Yamamoto's family was not like that. While Light didn't know their stance on same-sex relationships, he knew for

sure that Light being possessed would make Yamamoto's parents forcefully end the relationship and think he had done something.

He decided to take Yamamoto asking him out as a good sign of his parents' stance on dating a man, but Light already wondered what he could do about his secret. It didn't seem fair to Yamamoto to hide such a massive part of his life if they were going to be...together.

He decided that was something for future Light to worry about. After all, they had been friends for a decade without Yamamoto suspecting a thing. Surely he could think of something.

Yamamoto came back with popcorn, cookies, and more water. Light grinned and cuddled up with him again, watching the movie and realizing for the first time that he had been sharing a bed with someone who returned his feelings for the last couple of weeks.

He let his mind dwell on that and how his future was set in stone. He could see himself having a life with Yamamoto, and now he even had L's email. He could get a job alongside the famous detective whenever he wanted to, so he would never be bored in university. He was going to learn magic from Ryuk and change laws to improve the justice system. He felt like he had his life set in stone.

Things were truly looking up for him.

# Chapter 20

Ryuk dropped a heavy leather book with star-like engravings in front of Light when he returned from the Shinigami realm to ask the King how teaching Light magic would work.

Light was still over the moon with joy after his first date with Yamamoto that had gone remarkably well, so he didn't notice Ryuk's appearance at first until Ryuk tapped him.

"So your date went well?" He asked, and Light nodded, sitting up from where he had been staring at the ceiling.

"Yeah! I didn't think my feelings would ever be requited, but it went great! We went to the movies, and I know we do that a lot, but we were alone and got to talk a lot."

That still didn't ease his fears about how he would inevitably have to tell Yamamoto his secret if they would be together long-term. And Yamamoto had revealed today that his parents didn't know they were more than friends until he wasn't living under their roof anymore. He was keeping their relationship a secret, so if he was willing to hide something as big as that, surely he would keep Light's secret.

He still didn't know how he would tell Yamamoto, but he promised himself he would, and Dad agreed it was the right thing to do if he wanted to be with this boy for the rest of his life. Light smiled even remembered what Dad told him before his date.

*"If he hurts you, I'll tag-team with your demon parent to kill him and make it look like an accident. Also, don't get AIDS."*

The fact Dad had just accepted that Light had three parents, one of which was a demon, would always be funny to him.

Light brightened, "So did you get this book from the King?"

"Yeah," Ryuk opened the book and flipped through it, "I'm the youngest of my kind, but hearing all these things I didn't know we could do, I am disappointed in how boring our realm is." He put the book down at the front of Light. "You have to abide by an altered version of Shinigami rules since you're human."

Light crawled forward, struggling a bit since he was still recovering

from surgery. "Like the rules in the Death Note?"

"Yeah. Once you begin your training, you can't kill someone with your hands; it has to be via magic. That's the rule you will have to abide by until..." Ryuk paused, and Light looked up curiously.

"Until?"

"Once the humans notice and start worshipping you, you will gain the ability to grant yourself limited immortality." Ryuk explained, "You have your set lifespan and can add to it via taking the remaining lifespan of others. As long as you have an excess lifespan, you cannot age, be injured, or get sick. However, if you save a human who is set to die, all extra lifespan will go to them, and you'll have to build it up again, which shouldn't be much of a problem as long as you aren't desperately running out."

Light fell silent, eyes wide as everything he had ever known was thrown on its head. For so long, he had known that all humans without exception would die. But to hear that he could essentially become a Shinigami in a human's body and become immortal...

But didn't that mean he could play with this rule to maintain the lives of his loved ones? Because the idea of being immortal while those he loved grew old and died made him extremely uncomfortable the more that he thought about it. Maybe if he had known this sooner, but...

It didn't matter. Light had grown up his whole life planning to keep this secret. He would just keep his secret and, besides magic, live and die like a normal human. If he ever changed his mind, he could do so, but that sounded as good a plan as any.

"And if I save a life *without* being worshipped?"

"No negative effects, just like a human using the Death Note to save others." He frowned, "If I had to guess the remaining lifespan of who you killed just goes straight to the person you saved, but I don't know."

Relaxed, Light smirked, "So... do I get wings or something?" Ryuk laughed,

"Maybe. But before that, we should probably get you something to channel magic with while you practice. Typically for this kind of thing, it's animal familiars, but something tells me that's not ideal." He paused as though thinking, "I'll be right back."

Ryuk took off, and Light moved the grimoire over to read it, realizing quickly that he couldn't understand the ancient symbols within. He studied the illustrations within instead and the elegant brushstrokes describing talismans, memory alteration, controlling human minds, and possibly commanding the dead.

He couldn't help but wonder why the Shinigami King agreed to let Ryuk do this. If humans were meant to die without exception, what was his motive to let Light do this? Could Light teach other humans and maintain immortality for his loved ones?

When Ryuk returned, it was with a quickly made bamboo flute, which he tossed to Light. "Here. This should work." Light raised a skeptical eyebrow as he examined the instrument.

"I have to learn to play the flute to learn magic?"

Ryuk shrugged. "No, that'll just make it easier to avoid accidents. And it can always be something else. That was just the first thing I thought of."

"Accidents?" He shook himself. "Hold on, what am I learning that could cause accidents?!"

Ryuk just laughed in response, gesturing to the book. "Let's get started with teaching you Shinigami language."

...

*"This boy is the key to saving our kind and our realm,"* the King had told him, *"Your experiment has provided us hope. Teach his boy, and he will become one of us to restore our realm."*

Sixteen years ago, Ryuk had never expected this own experiment to alleviate boredom would turn into the thing that saved the Shinigami from the miserable existence they lived now. He didn't fully understand how Light becoming a made Shinigami would save them, and when he asked about the born hybrid, the King simply said he was still deciding what to do with an untrained wildcard.

Perhaps the King wanted Light to reach a god's status so he could go to the Shinigami realm himself and start to patch things up? That

made sense. But it was irrelevant, and Ryuk was now one of the highest-ranked Shinigami there were for his contribution, which gave him the ability to understand this grimoire and a language long dead to even the Shinigami. Learning what Shinigami had once been able to do before they got lazy was fascinating.

He hadn't known the Death Note could create an addiction to it in humans once they got started, and Shinigami, in the beginning, didn't even use notebooks. They psychologically tormented humans to the point of them committing suicide and sometimes double suicide. It made sense why the method had been changed if Shinigami needed a quick supply of lifespan.

*No wonder we all got so damn lazy,* he thought as he taught Light how to understand the symbols. He had already taught Light countless other languages from his infancy, so this wouldn't be particularly hard. How long would it be until Light used his newfound powers and became worshipped?

There was a lot in this book, but Light was a bright kid and had needed something new to learn, and once Light realized he could use this to further his goals in life, he would be even more determined to learn quickly.

And he could not wait to see what happened after that.

OoOoO

Light stood in the forest to play his flute in solitude. He was pretty good, but he wasn't nearly satisfied with his newfound skill yet with only three months of practice. Magic in itself was difficult even for him, and while he could do some aspects of magic without it and no risk of accidents, he wanted to be at his best with this flute to get it right.

He had learned from Ryuk that most aspects of magic didn't involve any assistance, but if he wanted to do this in large numbers, should the need ever arise like a war, having a vessel maintain control over multiple targets was preferred. If he was only controlling one thing at a time, it would be far more subtle to just act solo. So Light supposed he didn't even *need* to learn this since he had no plans of making himself known, but what if one day he had to? It was best to learn

now.

Leaves rose from where they had fallen to the ground and blew around while he played, having supported a music sheet on a branch to master the notes to the lullaby Ryuk used to hum for him when he was a child, as he had learned enough to figure out what notes went to what. Playing a song he already knew helped with the learning process of what it was supposed to sound like.

He still needed to practice the breathing aspect of all of this, and while he sometimes sang for fun, this was nothing like that.

He tried to visualize with his eyes closed which notes to hit, then felt gentle hands over his eyes, "Guess who?"

"Hey, Yamamoto," he turned and gave his boyfriend—and he still couldn't believe he was using that term—a quick kiss. "How did you know I was here?"

"I asked your mother, and she said you're probably out in the woods, but you don't tell anyone what you're doing out here." He glanced over, "So that's your big secret?" He grinned. "I think I expected some else that could be bringing you out here."

Light tried to keep the panic out of his voice. "Big secret? I've only picked this up in the last few months. I wouldn't call that a big secret, just that I want to actually be good at something before I do it around other people so as to not make ears bleed." Yamamoto laughed,

"Okay, that's fair." He put his hands in his pockets, "Your leg must be doing better." Light nodded,

"Yeah, I've been doing physical therapy to get better quickly. The walk here helps out a lot."

"I was just starting to think you flew here." He chuckled but then paused when he saw Light's brief expression. "Light? You okay?" He stepped over, placing his hand on Light's shoulder, "Hey, did I say something? Is this about the..." he paused, probably thinking about when Light almost fell to his death a few months ago.

It was just a joke, right? He didn't actually know anything about the truth. But Light bit his lip, wondering if this was the universe telling him something. He looked around for Ryuk, but he was out searching for apples, so Light was completely alone here with Yamamoto.

Light's breath hitched. "No, it's not about the kidnapping. I just..." he bit his finger as he tried to think about how he was going to say this before deciding that the best way he could say this was to show him. He tried to control his breathing, knowing that what he was about to do, it...it would change everything.

He threw his hand to the side, shadows and black energy forming around his hand as he envisioned a rose bush not far from where they were standing, and one rose floated from the bush and into his hand.

"I..." he couldn't bring himself to meet Yamamoto's eyes. *Please, please don't hate me.* "I can use magic. I know, I should have told you from the beginning. But—But..." he started hiccuping from his own panic, "I didn't want you to ever choose between me or your family."

Yamamoto hurried over and started trying to calm him down, "Hey, hey, breathe. Deep breaths, okay?" He pulled Light close immediately and helped him sit down before he collapsed, pulling out to bottle of water from his bag.

He didn't try to hush Light, doing what he could to help him through his panic. And when Light's breathing was back to normal, he started talking again.

"So..." he stammered for a moment before picking up the fallen rose, "How long?"

"Since I was a baby..." Light explained everything about Ryuk and growing up with a Shinigami, omitting the actual Death Note. Yamamoto was quiet, making it clear he would be asking questions once Light was done. So Light kept talking, not meeting his eyes still, reminding himself that this was the best thing to do, to tell him the truth in the first three months of their romantic relationship.

When he was finally done, Ryuk had come back and watched intensely at what was happening, and Light finally looked up at Yamamoto's eyes.

Yamamoto's expression was completely blank, as though he had no idea how to process this bombshell about the person he thought he knew. And after a few moments, he asked, "How the *hell* did you get kidnapped?"

"Hybrid," Light replied, "Yeah, my kidnapper wasn't exactly human. Not to mention the King hadn't given me the okay to learn magic in my own right yet."

Yamamoto looked around, "Okay, so what supernatural things are around us right now? Or are you just a magnet for trouble?"

"Magnet for trouble." He rubbed the back of his neck. "I'm sorry I didn't tell you sooner. I know I probably should have disclosed that information much sooner..."

"Yeah, I probably should have known what I was getting into." He replied casually, "But you do realize that I've been lying to my parents for months about dating you, right? Making me choose isn't really a concern here." He pursed his lips, running his hands through his hair.

Light bit his lip, "Are you okay?"

"Oh, you know, just having an existential crisis over the existence of the supernatural, one of which being my own boyfriend."

Light snapped upright, "Wait, we're still together?"

"If we're not, that's another piece of info I'm missing." He leaned back, "I'm just trying to process all of this. But I guess it explains one thing."

"Hm?"

"Your relationship with your mother. You always switched between Mom and Mother, and while that would normally be normal, the way you spoke about both always made me think it was two separate people. Maybe your Dad had a mistress or something, but he didn't seem like the type."

"I mean, my relationship with Mother's gotten better..." he inched closer, "So you're not mad?"

"I wish you had told me sooner." Yamamoto replied, "And my trust is a bit shaken, but I understand why you kept it a secret." He smirked a bit, "So what kinds of powers do you have?"

"Mostly moving things right now," Light replied, deciding to not mention the ability to kill people with his mind, "And a bit of necromancy, but I'm not really much for practicing that for obvious reasons."

"Yeah, that's a good call," he made some hand gestures as he spoke, "So if I see anything horrifying come out of the graveyard I can see from my window, I should just call you? Should I keep holy water guns or salt-filled hula hoops to avoid the undead?"

Light snorted a bit in his laughter, "I don't think you'll have to worry about that."

"And your parents didn't think a Shinigami would latch onto you, and yet here we are." He winked, "So are we still on for you spending the night at my place this weekend?"

Light nodded, "Yeah! Sayu's got her sleepover on Friday, but I'll be over on Saturday."

Yamamoto suddenly held his hand out to shake, "I'll keep your secret, but you can't keep big secrets like this again. We can have our private lives, but this secret impacts both of us. I can't make this work if you keep big secrets like this from me, surely you can understand."

Without hesitation, he shook Yamamoto's hand. "Deal."

"So, are you going to show off your flute skills, or are we just spilling deep secrets out here?"

"Oh. I—I'm not very good."

"You heard me play the piano when we were kids. Can't say I was too good at that either." He nudged him, "Light, the last time you said you weren't good at something, you were second place to me. And besides, learning instruments is hard." He then narrowed his eyes at the flute, "Or is that flute actually a weapon of mass destruction and to play it is to damn us all?"

"I mean..."

Yamamoto smacked his forehead, "You have got to be kidding me."

"It's just a normal flute," Light finished, "I can use it to channel magic if I want to, but I don't usually." He put it to his lips before hesitating, "You're still taking this incredibly well."

"I'm still having the aforementioned existential crisis," Yamamoto replied, "I'll have my bearings back by this weekend." Light nodded since that was understandable, and he brought the flute to his lips again.

"I guess I can play something." He focused on his childhood lullaby, closing his eyes and only opening occasionally to see Yamamoto smiling, and Ryuk smiled,

"I'll give you two some time alone." He took off, and Light continued playing.

But he couldn't help but feel like something was wrong. Yamamoto had accepted him, and that was everything he wanted. Still, he couldn't shake that feeling he was taking something away from Yamamoto and burdening him with this life-changing information. With every other person aware of the secret, it was because of Ryuk that they knew, and Light had never been the one to tell anyone before.

Maybe he just needed some time to process that he had finally told Yamamoto his secret after ten years. Everything would be fine, and now he could tell Dad he had finally done it, so there was no need for the family to be overly cautious anymore around Yamamoto.

He let himself get lost in the soothing music of the lullaby, knowing that he could keep his loved ones safe now.

Dad worked hard to protect the people of Japan, but Light was more than happy to play it safe and work hard to keep his family safe, and he already knew the first thing he was going to do when he was confident in his ability.

# Chapter 21

Light laughed with delight as he carried Yamamoto on his back while practicing with his abilities, having figured out how to carry himself and imitate flight without Ryuk's assistance.

It certainly made sneaking Yamamoto out of his house for dates much easier.

He helped Yamamoto into the window on the third floor of his home, and Yamamoto grinned. They were in and out in two hours without his parents suspecting anything even if they got back from work unexpectedly early.

"I must say," Yamamoto gave a cheeky grin, leaning on his windowsill, "This makes getting around much easier. I can see why you enjoy it so much." Light nodded,

"Yeah," he shrugged. "But we do still have to be careful, even if you took it well—" he was cut off by a kiss.

"I know, Light. Don't worry." He glanced to his desk. "I wish we could keep talking, but I think I have to actually study for the entrace exams," he laughed, and Light realized he had completely forgotten about those exams.

"I should probably go study too," he turned to leave, "See you tomorrow? Are we studying for real or...?"

Yamamoto winked. "We'll see."

Light nodded and turned to leave, landing on the ground and running back home, where he knew Ryuk was waiting for him. He had asked that since he knew how to get around on his own now to try having a date on his own, and he laughed hearing Ryuk complain loudly about how he was a teenager now.

Even if his leg was well on its way to being healed, he had to slow to a walk and occasionally use magic to support himself. Even if it had been six months now since the break and surgery, he still felt a dull pain from time to time.

But when he got home, he noticed Dad in the kitchen pacing worriedly, and then he ran over to Light and pulled him into an

embrace. "Oh, thank god, you're safe."

"Dad, what's going on?" Light asked worriedly, and he noticed Mother and Sayu in the living room.

"Beyond Birthday escaped prison," Dad explained, "You weren't answering your phone, and we thought he had taken you again."

"Don't worry, Dad," Light assured him. "I just had my phone on silent for the movie." He tensed as he truly processed Beyond Birthday was back. "Is L going to be coming back to help capture him again?"

"We've already contacted him." He put his hands on Light's shoulders, "Light, I know you've started practicing more magic, but until Beyond Birthday is captured, the rest of us thought it would be best for you to be in protective custody at the NPA building until he is recovered."

Light hesitated before sighing. "Alright, Dad. If that would make everyone feel better," he pulled out his phone, "But I have to call Yamamoto first. He's the only person I'm close to that isn't on the NPA...not yet, at least." He had always known Yamamoto wanted to be an officer, and it left Light wondering why everyone in his inner circle was in law enforcement. It wasn't that he minded, but it was something he took note of.

He didn't get a response from Yamamoto's phone. He probably hadn't turned it off silent after the movie and was focusing on studying. But after hearing Beyond Birthday was back, he looked up at Dad nervously. "Dad... how long has Beyond Birthday been out of custody?"

"I only got word of it an hour ago," Dad explained, "But he supposedly escaped last night, and the NPA was notified after a thorough search of the prison itself."

Light tried to calculate in his head the distance. Fuchū Prison was one of the most secure prisons globally and had never had an escaped inmate before. But he knew that wouldn't stop Beyond Birthday. The prison wasn't far from Tokyo at all, and with his superhuman speed...

He had probably been in the city within half an hour *at least* of his escape. That meant he had been in Tokyo for nearly twenty-four hours. Light wasn't going to pretend that wasn't more than enough time for him to do whatever the hell he wanted.

Ryuk flew through the wall. "There you are, Light-o. Did you hear

about Beyond?"

"I did." Light didn't even bother to hide who he was talking to, and he headed upstairs, quickly flipping through the book again and grabbing both his flute and a black cloak.

"Light-o, what are you doing?" Ryuk asked, and Light was already headed back out the door.

"I'm bringing Yamamoto back here," Light replied, his tone leaving no room for argument, taking off into the air and grateful for his cloak, making it easier to blend in with the night sky. He noticed Ryuk next to him, refusing to let him go alone.

He got to Yamamoto's house and jumped in through the window, only to hear shouting downstairs. He slid down the railing without any second thought and into the kitchen. He was surprised to find himself amused by what he was seeing.

Beyond Birthday was on the ground, and Yamamoto was holding his sword, which was sheathed and seemed to have been used as a bat. He turned to Light, "Oh, hey Light. Looks like your kidnapper escaped."

Light looked down at Beyond Birthday. "Not going to lie, it's extremely attractive you took him out with a sheathed sword of all things."

"Didn't have time to unsheathe it before he jumped me," he spun the sword playfully as though to show off. "I have watched too many horror movies to not be armed when I hear a noise downstairs and I'm home alone."

Light eyed Beyond Birthday. Something didn't seem right about this. He was half-Shinigami, and while Light didn't know his full limitations, and he had been injured in the explosion six months ago, was being hit upside the head even enough to knock him out? He glanced at Ryuk before deciding he wanted to keep his parent figure here just in case.

Yamamoto pulled out his phone, "I'll call the police. Do you mind magically binding him or something?"

"I can try," Light pulled out his flute and began playing to easier control the dark energy around him into bindings around Beyond Birthday's arms and legs before realizing this would be hard to explain to the police. He kept those restraints on for the time being and

headed into the closet down the hall.

"Ryuk, can you help me find zipties?" He asked, "Honestly those would probably be harder to break than magic."

"Right, especially because he's a hybrid, and the current restraints probably won't actually hold him."

"Wait what—"

That was when he heard it, a pained scream from Yamamoto. He raced out of the closet and back into the kitchen, and not only was Beyond Birthday up and had broken free, but Yamamoto was on the ground, blood pouring out of a long gash across his back.

"Yamamoto!" he checked Yamamoto's pulse and checked the wounds on his back. "Come on, wake up!"

"He won't last long," Beyond Birthday replied smugly. "Your involvement with him changed his lifespan, so I have much more freedom to kill him than before!"

Light snarled as he pulled Yamamoto in his arms, pleading with him to hang on as he had already lost consciousness. He felt the wound; it was varying in depth all the way from his left shoulder to his pelvis.

"You ruined my plans to get back at L," Beyond Birthday sneered, "And being noticed by him. So I'll take away something you love in return."

Something snapped within him, seeing Yamamoto bleeding out, and there was nothing he could do to stop it, and hearing that it was because of him that Yamamoto had been put in danger to begin with.

"Kid, what are you doing?" Ryuk asked worriedly, but Light didn't hear him as his eyes glowed blood red as he slowly looked up, his entire body shaking from rage.

"So we're going to fight for real?" Beyond Birthday asked, and Light only responded with a look of icy fury. Beyond Birthday didn't want to play fair by attacking an innocent, and Light refused to leave when the man who had haunted his nightmares for six months was right in front of him.

Humans were going to die eventually. Light had accepted long ago that it was inevitable. But to attempt murdering someone, especially for a reason as stupid as this, was impatient and unacceptable. He

didn't care that, in a sense, he and Beyond were not so different as humans with Shinigami powers. Beyond Birthday was nothing better than the dirt under his shoe.

Without even thinking about it, he let his channeled magic explode out of him, breaking the windows and rattling the house's very foundation. It sent Beyond Birthday flying back, and Light held Yamamoto protectively in his arms to keep him safe from any harm as he slowly stood up, placing him delicately on the couch.

He didn't care this would put his secret in jeopardy as he launched at Beyond Birthday and sent them both crashing through the window and into the forest not far from the graveyard by Yamamoto's house. His cloak and the darkness around him would protect his identity as he picked up his flute, letting his anger and desire for the man in front of him to die present itself in the music as the wind picked up around them.

But this was only a distraction as he took advantage of the darkness around him and, in one swift motion, put the flute away, took the sword, clashing his weapon with Beyond's long butcher knife. Yes, let him think for a moment that he could win.

They engaged in fast-paced combat, Light blocking erratic blows, and despite the rage that made him want to be just as uncontrollable and without form, if he wanted to win, he had to take advantage of his lead from being the first to attack.

He barely dodged the blow to the face, a shallow cut across his cheek being the only indication a fight had ever happened, and he decided he did not want to waste his time on a battle such as this.

He stopped in place, and with a simple gesture, Beyond Birthday's knife was out of his hands, and Light used the shadows to pick him up, constricting him painfully.

"You can't hold on," Beyond Birthday taunted, "And you can't kill me either."

Light didn't let on his feelings regarding the information he knew was true. But that did not mean he wasn't going to ensure this was handled tonight.

He launched into the air, grabbing Beyond Birthday by the collar and turning them both invisible as he flew perhaps five miles off the coast, deep into the ocean. Beyond Birthday looked down in alarm as Light

finally gave an indication of his feelings, sadism twinkling in his eyes.

"I can't kill you, but good luck getting out of this."

"This isn't over, Yagami," he growled, and Light chuckled.

"We'll see about that."

He dropped him, using his magic to force him deeper into the water, to ensure that even if he couldn't die, he would wish he was dead.

And then it was over. Beyond Birthday would be trapped down there for who knows how long, and Light felt his adrenaline leave him as exhaustion from using that much power so fast made his eyes roll into the back of his head as he fell towards the water, feeling himself land safely in Ryuk's arms.

"Yamamoto..." he whispered, his last thought being a plea that he would be alright.

OoOoO

When Light woke up, he was in his bed, and for a few moments, he wondered if everything had been a sick dream until he looked down at his bloody clothing and realized it was anything but.

"Did you sleep well?" He turned and noticed Dad sitting at his side, his gun visible at his hip. "Ryuk brought you back passed out."

"Dad, Beyond Birthday attacked Yamamoto, and he got badly hurt. Did—"

"He was on the phone with emergency services when he was attacked, and they rushed out. By the time they arrived, you and Beyond Birthday were gone. Yamamoto is alive, and while he needed a lot of stitches, he was found in time that once he wakes up, he should be okay."

Light hadn't realized his posture had become stiff until it felt like a massive weight was lifted from his shoulders. He closed his eyes, nodding. "Say it again," he almost demanded, and Dad didn't question the odd request.

"He's currently unconscious, but he is going to be okay." He placed a hand on Light's. "He's going to be okay. Do you want to go see him?"

Light nodded, and Dad helped him up and out of his bloody clothes.

"Clean yourself up, and I'll meet you downstairs. Something tells me you won't be able to eat until you see for yourself that he's okay, but I'll still make you a snack." He looked up, "I'm guessing you don't want to talk about what happened with Beyond Birthday."

"I dropped him in the ocean and he will hopefully never resurface."

"That..." Dad chuckled. "That's going to be fun to explain to L."

"Maybe just testify that he ran in the general direction of the ocean?" Light offered, and Dad shrugged.

"Someone saw you two fall out the window, and I already came up with a story that you shoved him out a window but he dragged you down with him, and I found you passed out in a tree. Not the most elegant lie ever, but I didn't have much time to come up with one."

"Thanks, Dad, for having my back." Dad kissed his forehead and headed downstairs. Light slumped and turned to Ryuk.

"Is what Beyond Birthday said true? That me associating with Yamamoto changed his lifespan?" Ryuk shrugged.

"Who knows? It makes sense since the Death Note is the only thing that can change lifespans, and you've grown up with a less-than-human life."

"Does that mean I'm putting everyone in danger for knowing my secret?" Light asked, changing into a clean shirt and jeans and looking through the book again, reading through the section regarding memory manipulation.

Ryuk chuckled, but it didn't have as much mirth as usual. "I don't think you have to worry about that as long as it's not someone who would take advantage of your abilities. It's not like your secret's going to start causing freak accidents."

"So Dad's team is likely safe," Light nodded to himself, "But Yamamoto..." he closed the book and put it back on his shelf, hesitating as he stepped out of the door.

As he got in the car with Dad, he looked down at the snack he had been packed, and Dad sighed. "Sorry I couldn't get you anything else besides some fruit. I might have to pick up groceries on the way back."

"Dad...do you ever think that being a police officer puts your family in danger, and having love in dangerous?"

"All the time." Dad replied without hesitation, "I live in constant fear that one day I'm going to come home and someone's killed your mother, sister, and you."

"So...how did you know you wanted to get married?"

Dad fell silent, and Light realized that was probably tied to the past he didn't like to talk about. After a few moments, he said, "Sometimes, you just know. But it's not easy, whether you choose to leave for someone's safety, or stay despite the risks." He glanced at Light. "Am I reading this conversation correctly, that your relationship hangs in the balance?"

"I don't know." Light whispered. "I just don't know, but...Beyond Birthday admitted the only reason he went after Yamamoto was to take away something important to me." He looked at his hands. "Even with all the power I have, I made a stupid mistake and it almost got him killed."

"Maybe talk to him about it?" Dad asked. "Just know that whatever happens, I'll be here for you, son."

"Thank you, Dad." He wiped his eyes. "It really does mean a lot." He stepped out of the car. "I'm sure you have work to do. I'll meet you at the NPA."

"Alright, Light." Dad drove away, and Light stepped inside, finding Yamamoto's room.

He almost stopped breathing when he saw Yamamoto, who was lying on his side, stitching all the way up his back. Unconscious had been a kind way to describe the condition he was in, as he still looked as though he was dead for a few moments.

He must have been incredibly lucky to have survived, and Light let himself have some relief in that. Perhaps he truly hadn't been meant to die, and that was what allowed him to stay alive.

One look at the pitiful state he was in strengthened Light's resolve

about what he needed to do, brushing Yamamoto's hair out of his face. Yamamoto opened his eyes slightly, and Light was surprised. "How long have you been up?"

"Not long," he mumbled. "Where's the guy?"

"I dealt with him," Light assured him. "I'm sorry I ever put you in danger like this."

"Not your fault..." Yamamoto gave a small smile, his eyes drifting closed again. The pain medication must be making him tired. Light kissed his forehead.

"Get some rest. You'll feel better when you wake up."

"Okay..." he closed his eyes. Light had to turn away for a moment to get his breathing under control before he turned back and gave him one final kiss on the lips, knowing he would never be able to do this again. But if he wanted to keep Yamamoto safe, he had to do this.

He placed his hand on Yamamoto's forehead, remembering the method the book instructed to alter and remove memories. It was a form of magic meant to make the owner of the Death Note lose all memory of it should they renounce ownership. However, Light found he could do it on his own, collecting the memories of himself and Yamamoto, erasing everything up to the point of their romance beginning. In Yamamoto's mind, he had broken up with Miho because things weren't working out, and he and Light were just good friends. He didn't know about Light's secret at all.

Was he doing the right thing? Perhaps he should have asked before he did this. He still had a hold of these memories. He could put them back or place them into something should he want to keep them. He didn't have to destroy them.

He would rather break Yamamoto's trust than *ever* see him dead. Beyond Birthday may think that Yamamoto was still the key to getting to him, but he knew L's failed successor was smart enough to have checked such things, as teenagers had brief relationships all the time.

Still...

He altered a few more memories, adding that his parents were considering moving to another region in Japan. He would add this to his parents later. Keep Yamamoto out of Tokyo, where he could be in danger should Beyond Birthday ever rise from the sea.

It would be fine to keep the friendship they shared, right? Was it selfish to go through the trouble of erasing his memories and not remove everything to keep him safe? If Yamamoto was moving out of Tokyo, they could still call and talk, and Light could pretend that the love they shared or Yamamoto being the first person he had given himself to in full had all been a dream.

Removing all of Yamamoto's memories of them seemed like too much of a violation. This would do. And if it was meant to be, it would happen again.

After finding Yamamoto's parents in the cafeteria planning to bring food up to their son, he added the thought of moving into their heads quickly. He said a quick goodbye as he headed out of the hospital and to the NPA, dragging his feet slightly, noticing that it was fittingly enough beginning to rain. Ryuk followed him, deciding to not ask the question he was itching to, if Light had just ended things and sent the one he loved away.

*This was the right thing to do,* he told himself as he headed into the building, noticing Matsuda trying to talk to him, but he just walked past and into Dad's office.

Dad didn't even lay eyes on him for a full second before he knew what had happened. "Oh, Light..."

Light finally broke down sobbing and ran into his father's arms, reality sinking in that things were really over. He could tell himself all he wanted that maybe they would be together again one day, but he gut told him this was the end of his relationship with Yamamoto. Even if somehow his feelings were returned again, he wasn't sure he could ever look at Yamamoto again without remembering that he had erased those memories without even talking to Yamamoto about it. *This was the right thing to do,* but he already felt he had violated his trust too much to ever let things go back to the way they were.

He continued to cry, and Dad didn't make any effort to stop him, rubbing soothing circles on his back and comforting him just like Light had done for him in the past.

Ryuk watched cluelessly for a moment, awkwardly patting Light's head. "Uh...it will be alright. There, there?"

Despite how clueless it was, the attempt actually made Light smile. Dad wiped away some of Light's tears.

"Hey, how about I bake something tonight. When I was your age, most breakups were handled by watching bad movies and wallowing for a couple of days, and eating baked goods. Sound good?" Light nodded, and Dad ruffled his hair.

"Come on, let's head home."

OoOoO

So it was murders that triggered the anger to make the experiment's powers stronger. The Shinigami King found this fascinating, especially given how much this would benefit him should this trend prove to be a defining characteristic of Light Yagami's personality.

And the first person to make those abilities anything besides domestic purposes was the hybrid.

He found this Beyond Birthday creature trapped underneath a boulder underneath the water, and he chuckled, seeing the hybrid had been defeated by his experiment, who for now was simply human with a god's magic. But a hybrid with a human's heart and desire for petty revenge may be exactly the thing he needed to make the experiment's powers stronger.

With less than a thought, the boulder was destroyed, and Beyond Birthday was stunned to find that without anything atop him, he could breathe underwater with no problem. He glared at the sight of the King in front of him with no fear. "Who are you?"

"Someone who has decided I have use for you yet." This hybrid was never meant to exist, but perhaps he could be used, as his tie to humans meant he understood humans and what made them tick.

Humans were always so predictable, and their only purpose was to be farmed for Shinigami to live. However, with the new involvement of Light Yagami, the lifespan of everyone close to him was called into question. Perhaps their lives would be longer or even shorter, even if the King wasn't entirely sure unless he bothered to go out of his way and check.

But there was no point in that, as humans, selfish creatures that they were, only served a means to an end for the Shinigami. Perhaps

amusement could be found from them alongside worship and lifespan.

And he was nothing if not fascinated to see how the experiment's power grew in response to the uncertain future ahead.

# Chapter 22

Chapter Notes

July 2006

Light finished up the paperwork for another case in the unused storage closet of the NPA that had been turned into his own office to use whenever he had free time. He still didn't understand why nobody used the storage closets, but he did know one on the floor above everyone considered Aizawa and Ide's storage closet. Did they just have ownership of storage closets?

Still, he couldn't get his mind off of what he had done with Yamamoto. He was happy since he moved to Morioka in the Tōhoku region, and he was safe, which was the most important thing. Still... what he had done... he had tried to justify to himself that it was safer for both of them. But what did he know? He couldn't shake the feeling he had made a horrible mistake, so he took a page out of Dad's book and did anything he could to distract himself.

He had less than a year until the entrance exams for university, so he had needed to start going to cram school to refresh himself since he hadn't done anything related to academics in nearly seven years. But he also spent his time studying the book and helping Dad solve cases. He was right about it being a good distraction, and it helped him ensure Beyond Birthday hadn't risen from the sea.

As he glanced at the file again, he snapped it shut and headed downstairs to the morgue. Ryuk laughed as Light opened up the drawer with one of the bodies for his current case. Stabbed over fifty times...this girl was only a year younger than he was. He placed his hand on her forehead, and the girl's eyes flew open, still rolled into the back of her head.

"It's okay," he was pretty sure the corpses didn't regain consciousness, but it was better to be nurturing and kind just in case. "I am here to help you. I need to see your memories."

She didn't resist like what sometimes happened when he took control of the dead, so he took that as permission and peaked into her memories.

He saw a forest. She turned around to grab something in the car, and

then two voices behind her.

*"One...two...three."*

Light almost pulled out of the memory in shock from the sound of her scream, but once she turned around and tried to run, he saw the faces of two girls her age doing this. He remembered these girls who were supposedly her best friends.

He made sure to stay until the memory ended in full, and he closed her eyes and ensure she was at rest before closing the drawer again. He looked up at Ryuk, letting his disgust be seen for him.

"Humans are vile creatures sometimes, Ryuk. I will never understand them."

"Hey, not all humans suck." Light turned and saw Aizawa come in. "I was planning to ask the coroner about an update on the case I'm working, but you being in here doing...whatever it is you're doing, means he's not here."

"No, he's on a call with his wife for the next fifteen minutes every day. She always checks to make sure the undead haven't slain him." He frowned when he noticed Aizawa holding his files in his left hand when he was dominantly right-handed. "Did something happen to your hand?"

"Just a little sore," he explained. "I got an injury a few years back on a case, and it acts up sometimes." He crossed his arms. "So what were you doing?"

"Testing my hunch about who the culprit is, and this was one of those moments I hate being right." He shook his head softly. "I'll probably go psychologically torment one of the culprits until she confesses."

"Sounds concerning," Aizawa replied. "But I suppose given the violence of this case and you know for sure who the culprit is... just check to make sure there's not something going on behind the scenes before you do that."

Light nodded. "I always do." He headed out and was stopped by Ide. "Is this about Aizawa's hand?"

"Yeah," Ide ran a hand through his hair, messing it up. "I'm guessing he said it was an old case-related incident? It's not. Since we were on the NPA, I've been his only partner, and I remember all of his injuries.

More specifically, the ones that don't come from cases that he says are from cases."

Light grimaced, knowing all too well what Ide was talking about. "We're on the same page that it's his wife, right?" Ide nodded firmly.

"You haven't met her for longer than a few minutes occasionally, but if you call her out, she doesn't even hide it." He crossed his arms as they walked down the hall. "She was awful as a teenager and she's just as awful now."

"Really?"

Ide chuckled bitterly. "Yeah. And she *hates* me since I know what's happening and like to keep him away from that house as long as possible." He sighed, and Light put his hands in his pockets.

"You care about him a lot."

"More than anything."

Light smirked. "You should tell him how you feel." Ide started laughing, which caught Light by surprise.

"Oh, trust me." He said. "He knows." He then slumped. "I want to help him, but since the damn justice system doesn't acknowledge women as culprits in abuse cases, and she'd probably win custody of Yumi in a divorce, he'll never leave."

"What if we have proof?" Light asked. "Surely, if there is proof she's the one in the wrong here, he can get custody." He got an idea. "Wait...what if we just charge her with assault and battery? It won't handle the whole abuse situation, but if we get her for a related crime, maybe that would work in a divorce?" He paused. "But if the marriage is arranged, his parents won't be pleased."

"I could care less about what his bastard parents want," Ide snapped. "We just need proof."

"We might be able to get it later." He stepped into his office and grabbed his backpack. "Don't worry, we'll figure it out, maybe a polygraph test or proof of injuries. Let me just deliver this file to Dad."

"Alright," Ide waved to Light. "I'll see you tomorrow." Light nodded and headed into Dad's office. Dad looked up.

"How are you doing?" Light put the file down.

"We were right and the friends did it." He turned, but Dad stopped him.

"Light...you looked in her memories, didn't you?"

"I...I didn't want to believe I was right. I was hoping I would find something else." He turned back around, his shoulders shaking. "It—It was awful, Dad! They stabbed her so many times and watched her slowly die. Why are people like this?" He clenched his fists. "I get the death penalty is complicated, but people who murder like *that* deserve nothing but the worst."

Dad sighed. "I don't want you looking at the memories of the deceased. It's taking its toll. You know that." Light huffed.

"You're right, as always..." he trailed off. "I'm headed to cram school. Be back home in a reasonable hour, okay?" Dad hugged him.

"Don't worry, Light. I'll be home soon."

"Good." Light headed out, hurrying to cram school while Ryuk followed him.

"So what's today's lesson?" Light groaned.

"I'm pretty sure it's justice. This is going to be interesting." He looked up at Ryuk. "I'm having a dilemna."

"Oh?"

"Killing people is pointless. All humans die eventually, but at the same time, there are humans out there who have no right to waste our resources. I know it's all complicated, but in cases like this, you still know they're not getting the death penalty." He put his hands in his pockets as he walked. "If I do anything, it's impatient, but..." he shrugged. "I don't know."

"Well," Ryuk laughed. "You're the one with the power, and I'm just an observer. So I won't stop you from doing whatever you want."

"Right. Thanks, Ryuk." Light sat down in class and already felt himself spacing out as the teacher rabbeted on empty words to give the students faith in their governing figures. Light groaned, raising his hand.

"Yes, Yagami?"

"Is this discussion taking us anywhere?" he asked boredly. "Justice and the like, they're all just empty ideals."

The teacher, Mr. Chiba, if he remembered correctly, was taken aback by his top student's words. "Justice is the foundation of society."

Light stood up. "But that's always subject to the doctrine of convenience. For example, how about we take war? Each side flies high the flag of justice, and they each put their lives on the line for it, but the truth of it is plain and simple: its mass murder for the gain of their country."

"Then what is justice here within our nation?" Mr. Chiba asked, probably expecting Light to back down. However, he had no intention to, as the other students watched to see where this debate ended.

"It's a political tool." Light replied, "Justice has always been for the strong, just a standard defined by the leaders in command. It doesn't actually help those less fortunate." He used hand gestures as he spoke to make his point clearer. "And we can't seek out the appropriate leaders because everyone thinks they or someone they admire is the right choice, which is always incredibly bias. In the end, with too much power, any leader becomes corrupt. Those who want power over others shouldn't have it."

Mr. Chiba was completely stunned. "So what is your point, Yagami?"

"My point is the laws and such are filled with loopholes, and evil remains a threat, a fact we take as common sense. And what about laws that go unaddressed? How about if a man is being abused by his wife, nobody will take that seriously because of a preexisting notion? My point is we can't rely blindly on what we are told by the government or our justice systems, because there is always something happening behind the scenes."

"One must seek their own forms of justice." Mr. Chiba tried, but Light took a deep breath to remain respectful.

"What does that even mean to do? To live by letting things go according to the flow. If you put forth your own ideas of justice, you'll just be laughed at and ignored." He scoffed, "That's how it'll always be. That's our 'justice' for you. Justice seems like an all too fleeting dream to me."

The students all began talking amongst themselves about this information. Even the teacher didn't seem to know what to do in the face of it. "Let's not discuss politics in class."

Light sat down and decided not to comment on exactly what they were doing as their very lesson. He honestly wondered why he was even here. He was already decently refreshed and had his old books to study. Maybe he would ask Dad if he could quit.

He ended up doodling in his school notebook and heading out, digging into his back for his cloak, when he was suddenly stopped by a girl named Yuri.

"Hey, Light," she smiled. "You know, I had never really thought about the justice system that much until you brought up a bunch of problems." Light put on a grin.

"It's a fascinating topic." He began walking, and she followed him. "You know, I have a few books on the subject if you want me to let you borrow them."

"I'm just surprised," she admitted. "Your Dad is the Superintendent of the NPA. I wouldn't think you would have that kind of stance." Light chuckled.

"Yeah, most people wouldn't think that. But once you get to know him, he's actually got some less-than-popular opinions." He waved. "I've got to head home. I'll see you on Monday, okay?" She nodded, and he ran off, throwing on his cloak and taking off into the night sky. He only hoped Ide would be able to help now that they thought of something that could be done.

He considered stopping by the home of one of the culprits of today's murder case, such as causing hallucinations of her victim, but he decided it would be more fun to catch her the proper way. Besides, he didn't want her to take another method out instead of facing justice.

He climbed onto his balcony and almost yelped in surprise when Mother was waiting for him.

"So what had you using the cloak?" She asked, and Light sighed as he climbed fully inside.

"I had been considering something for the investigation but decided against it," he said, "Dad will hopefully be home soon." He grimaced. "I know you don't like it when I sneak back in this way."

The sound of girls laughing downstairs made Light realize why Mother was in here as she laughed.

"Seeing how many of those girls have a crush on you, I get it. I really do. Besides, that invisibility ability means you're less likely to get caught, so I'm not as worried." She sighed. "I was just coming up to warn you the girls have arrived. I already came up with the excuse that you were at cram school for why you weren't here earlier." She kissed his cheek before heading out. "I'll make sure to save you some of the treats."

Once she was gone, Light discarded his cloak and flopped onto his bed. "Tomorrow's certainly going to be interesting."

Ryuk laughed. "Yeah. Wonder what's gonna happen."

Light tried not to think about the Death Note in his drawer. He had another two months before he had to write a name, but sometimes when he was upset, he started feeling the pull to use it. *I can't let myself use the Death Note like that. Otherwise, I might lose control of myself.*

He took out his flute and began softly playing to calm himself, making sure his door was locked so he would be alone. He beamed at Ryuk. "Wanna play video games?"

"Yeah!"

They played for a couple hours, but Light noticed he hadn't seen Dad's car return. So he pulled out his phone and called him, thankfully getting an answer right away. "Dad, hey! Where are you?"

*"I'm not coming home tonight, Light,"* Dad's voice broke, and Light knew something was wrong.

"Dad, what's going on?"

*"I'm at the hospital right now,"* Dad choked out. *"Something happened to Aizawa."*

# Chapter 23

Light wasn't even off the phone with Dad as he was grabbing his cloak and darting out the window, not bothering to leave a note as he headed to the hospital. He already had a bad feeling about what had happened to Aizawa, but he had to know for sure.

When he got to the hospital, his breath caught in his throat at the sight he found. After all these years...this seemed so unimaginable. Aizawa wasn't supposed to be like this. This wasn't supposed to be happening.

He had grown so used to Aizawa always doing something, always insisting he was fine even when others worried, that it sent Light reeling to see him laying frighteningly still in a hospital bed hooked up to far too much machinery. It took him a few minutes to force his eyes away from the man who had helped raise him like an older brother in a sense. He finally noticed Dad pacing the room and Ide clinging to Aizawa's limp hand, begging for him to wake up.

"What happened?" He forced out, and Ide couldn't get words out as he tried to calm himself down, so Dad had to explain.

"We don't know." He sighed as he elaborated, gesturing to Aizawa and the bandages around his head. "It's a head injury, but we don't know what caused it. Ide arrived to take Aizawa and Yumi after she called, only to find he was in bed and wasn't waking up. Eriko refuses to explain what happened even after she was put in custody. I have Yumi staying with Matsuda for the time being."

Light forced himself to walk over to Aizawa, who didn't respond to the sound of him moving closer. He glanced at Ryuk, who watched patiently as though waiting to see what would happen as Light placed his hand on Aizawa's head. He needed to know what had happened to determine how to handle it.

He found himself in Aizawa's memories, noticing immediately what he was looking for was far fuzzier than he had anticipated. He couldn't hear what was said between Aizawa and Eriko, but he could see just fine that they got into some sort of argument that led to Eriko shoving him down the stairs. While it didn't knock him out, it only took perhaps half an hour before he was throwing up and collapsed. If he had to guess, Aizawa was put to bed and laid there for a few hours which was why he was so close to death.

But suddenly, he found himself in a different memory, one that was far clearer, and he instantly realized the memory he was looking at was of Aizawa and Ide as teenagers, probably around sixteen or seventeen. He instantly noticed that Aizawa was wearing a kimono of a wealthy family, and Ide was just wearing a white shirt and jeans that were a couple sizes too big. The two were on a blanket together, asleep curled up next to each other in the late afternoon sun.

As Light surveyed the scene in front of him, he got an idea as he wondered if he could dig deeper into Aizawa's mind. If he could see this memory despite not looking for it, Aizawa probably knew he was here. Could he maybe find Aizawa here?

He tried to look around but found the only way to leave this memory was to leave Aizawa's mind altogether. Knots formed in his stomach as he moved to leave, knowing there wasn't anything he could do. He didn't have the power to heal.

Maybe hoping some part of Aizawa was aware enough of his presence, Light muttered, "Wake up soon, okay?"

He closed his eyes, returning to his body and snapping awake, feeling himself in the car, a blanket wrapped around him. Light looked up at his father, seeing the haunted look in his eyes, as though sitting in that hospital, he had seen this all before.

"Dad?" Light asked, and Dad snapped up, looking at him.

"Were you trying to wake him up?" Dad asked, and Light nodded, realizing that since he had been told he wound up in a state of dissociation while looking in memories, Dad had probably seen it best to bring him home. Dad noticed what Light was about to ask. "Ide's going to stay with Aizawa. I wasn't sure if you were in shock or using your power, so I thought bringing you home would be best."

Light nodded, sitting up. "Hey...Dad?"

"Yes?"

"Are Aizawa and Ide just friends? Or is there something else going on?"

Dad paused for a moment, blinking. Then he chuckled. "Yeah, there's more going on between them. Actually, there has been since the beginning. But they did everything they could to prevent that from interfering with Aizawa's marriage, even if everyone knew those

feelings remained on an emotional level. Contrary to what rumors of their time in the broom closet may imply... They set up a secret infirmary for Aizawa's injuries so he could avoid being caught by cameras, nothing more. If I'm being honest, the marriage was doomed from the start, and I'm pretty sure everyone except Aizawa and Eriko's parents knew it."

It had been going on for that long? Light tried to process the information he was given, how in hindsight, it hadn't exactly been a guarded secret. He looked up at Dad again.

"Do you think Aizawa will be able to get a divorce when he wakes up?"

"Yes, I believe so," Dad sighed, parking the car, and Light could tell he wasn't nearly as optimistic as Light was about Aizawa waking up.

"Hey...Dad, is there something you're not telling me?"

Dad turned to look at him, "Hm? Oh, no, Light," he stuffed his hands in his pockets. "I just...I'm not a fan of seeing my loved ones in hospitals. Brings back some bad memories." He didn't elaborate, running his hands through his hair and messing it up. "Aizawa will be fine...he'll be fine."

Ryuk chuckled, and Light grimaced. Even as he said it, Light knew that despite wanting to more than anything, Dad did not fully believe the words he was saying.

OoOoO

Over the next four days, Yumi stayed with the Yagami family, as Ide refused to leave Aizawa's side for any reason. He was stable for the time being, but he failed to maintain consciousness for more than a few minutes at a time, and he didn't seem to be aware during that time.

Light read through the old grimoire again, knowing that nothing in a book about death would assist the situation at hand, so he mostly used the reading time as a distraction from the fact someone he had grown up with was still close to death. Yumi stayed in Sayu's room for the time being, so he wasn't worried about Yumi walking in and seeing

something she shouldn't.

Something he noticed was that in the back of the grimoire, there were blank pages in the back that weren't there before. Judging by the way Ryuk had laughed when he saw it, Light began to wonder. Did this mean he could experiment with his power?

He pulled out a pen and decided to write down some of his recent findings that using the music from his flute, he seemed to be able to manipulate the emotions of others, as he had for the last few nights when Yumi was unable to sleep due to fear for her father.

He headed downstairs and noticed Mother packing a bag. "Is that for Dad?"

Mother nodded somberly. Dad hadn't come home in four days from work, so he probably did need food and a change of clothes by now. He noticed a distant look in Mother's eyes. "I haven't seen him this distraught since Claudia passed away."

Light sighed. Even though he and Mother had come to an understanding that Ryuk was not to blame for what happened to Claudia, it only served as a reminder of why his relationship with Mother would never fully be what other kids had. Despite both knowing they loved each other, there was no changing the past.

"Can you..." Mother asked hesitantly, "Maybe try doing something? You and what was happening with Ryuk was the thing to pull him back last time and make him realize he needed to be home. If Aizawa doesn't make it...can you try and bring your father back?"

Light hesitated as he took the bag from Mother, and he felt that reality sink in. All his life, he had known humans died no matter what, but it had... it hadn't felt real—well, it had, he worked enough cases to know death was very real, but when it came to losing people he cared about, it seemed like such a faraway thing. Not something that could happen this soon.

He left without a word, trying to push that thought out of his head, deciding to just drop off the bag to Dad. When he got to the NPA building, everything seemed so much more somber, as though one of their fellow officers being hospitalized the way he had had left them all in shock. Maybe everyone was confronting the reality that the world wasn't as cut and dry as they had believed it to be in the past, and this would be the start of improvements in the NPA besides the people Dad personally worked with and trained.

He knocked on the door to Dad's office. "Dad... are you there?"

No response, so Light opened the door, expecting to find Dad passed out at his desk. But Dad wasn't here at all, so Light hurried out to find Matsuda since there should be an hour left in his shift. "Hey, Matsuda!"

Matsuda looked up from the case he was working on, "Oh, hey Light." He didn't get up, and Light noticed his trademark grin was far more forced than usual. "Are you looking for the Chief? He went running out a few minutes ago. He didn't explain why, so I guess everyone is just waiting to see if it's about Aizawa."

"What?!" Light broke into a sprint out the door, throwing on his cloak and becoming invisible as he had memorized what room Aizawa was in, finding the window on the second floor and climbing inside. The sight that he found made his blood run cold.

"Shuichi, please!" Ide begged as Aizawa began to seize in bed, and he was gripping onto the bar near his bed. Dad must have run off to grab a nurse, and Light began moving anything that Aizawa could hurt himself on.

Ryuk looked on, and Light looked to his Shinigami parent. Even if Ryuk wasn't allowed to tell him if Aizawa was going to die, he had hoped to find any indication from Ryuk telling him one way or another.

But as Aizawa fell still, the rhythmic spasming replaced with the shrill sounds of a flatline sent Light into action. Hastily shoving Ide out of the way, Light checked Aizawa's pulse just to be sure but already knew there wasn't going to be one. He knew this could happen after seizures for the heart to stop, so he had to act quickly.

Beginning chest compressions, Light refused to meet Ryuk's gaze just in case this was going to be futile. The door flew open, and Dad came in with a nurse, and his eyes widened as he saw what Light didn't care enough to notice, of the dark magic laced around Light's hands and absorbing into Aizawa's chest.

Suddenly, Aizawa shot upright, eyes wide open, and Light almost laughed in relief until his stomach dropped as he realized something was very wrong.

Aizawa's eyes were typically hazel, but now his irises were dark gold. He looked around with zero recognition before deciding that Dad

seemed to be the biggest threat and lunged out of bed like a wild animal, not caring that he tore the IV out of his arm.

Dad dodged and slammed the door shut on the nurse so Aizawa couldn't escape. Light didn't know what he had done, and when he looked to Ryuk, the Shinigami seemed just as confused.

Ide, however, had no fear and grabbed Aizawa firmly by the arms to keep him still despite his thrashing.

"Shuichi, look at me," he insisted, "Focus on me. You know me. Nobody is here to hurt you." It was as though he didn't care at all that Aizawa was under the influence of dark magic, and Light was about to try and do something when he suddenly realized that the longer Aizawa was looking at Ide, he was calm.

After a few moments, Aizawa blinked slowly. "Hideki?" His knees gave out as he fell into Ide's waiting arms. He looked around and realized what he was wearing and the bandages around his head. "What happened?"

Dad held his wrist where he had landed slightly off while trying to get away from the attacking younger officer. "You've been unconscious for four days after hitting your head. You had a seizure, Light revived you, and then you tried to attack me."

Aizawa rubbed his head. "I don't know what came over me." He leaned his hand against the wall, only for it to crack under his touch. Aizawa recoiled and turned to face Light. "Light, what did you—" he froze with wide, unblinking eyes.

Light frowned as he looked down at his hands. He must have done something to Aizawa. He had been acting like... he had acted like the corpses if Light raised them, and they had felt the need to fight before they died. And now, with the strength he suddenly displayed? He must have done something.

He looked up and noticed that Aizawa was staring directly at Ryuk. Ryuk looked back. "Uh....hi?"

Aizawa blinked a few times, "Hey, Light, what's with the undead clown creature behind you?"

Light spun around, eyes wide as he realized what was going on. "Ryuk, can you say something?"

"Are there any apples around here?" Ryuk asked. "I'm starving!"

Aizawa backed up and ended up once again in Ide's supporting hold as the door open the multiple doctors came in to see what the hell was going on, and for good reason. Not only had someone with a serious head injury sprung to life just fine, but he had tried to attack someone he should know well.

Dad pulled Light to the side. "Light, what did you do? You've mentioned having the ability to control the dead, is that..."

Light looked back over at Aizawa as he was examined by doctors, none of which seemed phased by what they were looking at besides comments that Aizawa's heartbeat was slow. As he was being looked over, Ide stayed by his side, holding his hand.

"No, he seems to be alive," Light replied. "I...I honestly have no idea what I did. Ryuk, do you know?" Ryuk laughed.

"I've got no idea either, but this is going to be interesting nonetheless."

Dad crossed his arms. "We may need to take Aizawa somewhere for a little while until we figure out what's going on and if he's going to flip out like that again. I would rather not endanger him or you if he, for some reason, spontaneously attacks like that again." He hesitated for a moment, looking back over at Aizawa and Ide. "...I know where we can go."

...

What had Light done this time?!

Ryuk looked at Shuichi Aizawa in amazement and how while his name was still able to be seen, his lifespan was gone. Despite being injured, Aizawa wasn't going to die from this. He still had decades left in his lifespan, so Ryuk hadn't expected anything when Light moved to save his life, but now it seemed Shuichi had somehow been imbued with Light's power, and it left him between life and death.

Seeing as the King hadn't already handled the situation, there was doubtfully an issue. Even if a problem did arise, given the Old Man's fascination with what Light Yagami was doing, he doubted anything

would be done.

Just as well. Leave it to Light to somehow discover new things his power could do, and now Ryuk could be seen by someone else, which was always interesting.

Still...it had been kind of strange not being able to contribute much to Light's thinking process because he wasn't allowed to say that Aizawa would have survived on his own. Matters of life and death made talking difficult, and he couldn't play the rule to talk to and assure Light if he couldn't give certain pieces of information.

He supposed he could offer Light the Shinigami eyes, not that it would matter since Light knew how to extend his own lifespan if he desired. But he kind of liked seeing Light being unaware of information he was pretty sure would be torturous for humans. It made Light less jaded, and seeing Light not knowing something was kind of interesting, especially given what that lack of knowledge had accidentally created.

Seventeen years and Light only managed to be increasingly interesting. Ryuk could not be more grateful he had chosen this human for his experiment; it was giving him results far better than anything he could have imagined.

# Chapter 24

The cabin was undeniably beautiful, and as Light ran his hands along the logs that made up the walls, sanded to be smoothed for the interior, he looked up to Dad, who smiled bitterly as he looked out at the sand just outside the porch housing a small outdoor table.

They were at the lake that Dad had gone to with his family as a child in America. Dad assured them the only people who would know this lake even existed were those who grew up in the area or had family who did so. So this was the perfect place to stay while they figured out what was going on with Aizawa.

The most nerve-wracking part of the trip was the plane. Light had never been out of Japan before, so despite a plane being somewhat terrifying, there was the constant fear about Aizawa. But he had been just fine as though he had never had a breakdown in the first place.

Matsuda looked around the cabin's rooms, having been allowed to come along since they needed someone to help in the event Aizawa flipped out again. "Woah! Chief, how did you get this place so quickly?"

"Oh, it's my nephew's..." he tried to think about how to phrase this. "His aunt-in-law's cabin. In this area, everyone knows everyone, so I told my mother I needed to come down on short notice and she arranged something with Mary. Mary said we can borrow the place for two weeks. Just please try not to do any magic in the house, I don't want to explain this," he gestured vaguely at Aizawa's gold eyes, which for the time being, he was hiding with sunglasses until they could see if colored contacts were an option. He then took a breath and slipped into an American accent with ease. "I'm headed out to the grocery store; I'll be back in about three hours. Anything you guys want, or should I just get whatever?"

Matsuda hurried over to Dad, "I'll go with you, Chief, in case you need any help carrying things." Dad chuckled.

"Alright," he glanced back at Light, Aizawa, and Ide. "If you three need anything, I have a map on the table towards the small general store about five miles away."

"We'll be alright," Aizawa assured him, then paused as soon as Dad was gone. "Actually..."

Light pulled out his grimoire, "Aizawa, have you eaten anything since...?"

"No, now that I think about it," Aizawa realized, "I hadn't thought about it until now. I'm still not hungry."

Ryuk laughed, "Yeah, it's the same thing with Shinigami too. We can eat, but don't have too." Light nodded as he took notes in the back of the grimoire, sighing as he listed the similarities that seemed to imply Aizawa behaved like some sort of corpse that retained its consciousness. He checked Aizawa's heartbeat again, which was slow but definitely present.

"Okay..." Light sucked in a breath, "I think I know what happened. Ryuk mentioned you weren't actually meant to die, but I still ended up accidentally using magic while resuscitating you when you flatlined. It looks like I caught you in some weird state between life and death, so you behave like a sentient corpse but are definitely still mostly alive. I suppose it probably means since I used magic directly on your heart, and given your strength and eyes, you might have some power of your own now?"

"So what does that exactly mean?" Ide asked, "Can you reverse it and he'll just go back to normal?"

"I don't know," Light admitted, grimacing as he stepped outside onto the porch and pulled out his flute just in case this got out of hand, "Aizawa...this is going to feel like a massive violation, but I'm going to try controlling you to see if that's really it."

Aizawa shrugged his jacket off, and Light was still surprised by Aizawa's shorter hair since the doctors had cut it while running tests to see what was going on with his head while unconscious. "Just do it."

Light slowly walked over to Aizawa and gently touched his forehead. Aizawa's eyes rolled into the back of his head, and it was the unsettling white of all corpses he took control of.

"That is not okay!" Ide yelped, but Aizawa showed no indication of being aware at all.

The hair on the back of Light's neck stood on end. "Do a backflip."

Aizawa obeyed, doing a perfect backflip that turned into a backhand spring with merely a gesture from Light. Light's eyes widened as he

released his hold over Aizawa, who fumbled for a moment before glaring daggers at Light.

*"Never* do that again."

"Wasn't going to," Light shuddered, "That is extremely unsettling."

"You think?!" Aizawa asked incredulously, taking a deep breath before pausing. "Do I actually have to breathe anymore or is that a natural instinct?"

Ide crossed his arms. "I think it's best to test that through swimming or running and see if you're out of breath, not you just deciding not to breathe. We work in the NPA and slow heart rate and gold eyes is one thing, but not breathing is kinda hard to ignore." He muttered to himself. "Your hazel was much prettier."

Aizawa smiled towards Ide and headed back inside. "Well, I saw a bottle of unopened vodka in the pantry, so I am going to have a drink and lay down. We have two weeks, and I still feel like I got violated by that. So if you excuse me, I'm going to figure out how to force myself to sleep."

Light shrunk down. "I'm sorry this happened."

Aizawa turned and softened, walking over to Light. "Hey, we'll figure this out. I guess it's not that bad as long as we figure out the attacking thing and you don't use that kind of control again. It's not like I drink blood or anything detrimental." He suddenly perked up. "Oh yeah!" He pointed directly at Ryuk, "Am I right that you're a Shinigami?"

Ryuk cackled. "That's right."

"So what are your thoughts about this?"

"Hey," Ryuk said, "That book might be mine, but I'm learning alongside Light-o. Humans don't usually use Shinigami powers, so this hasn't happened before. But since the Old Man hasn't gotten involved with this, I would say it's not that big of a deal."

"I see," Aizawa nodded, "Well, Hideki and I are going to go lay down for a bit, maybe call Yumi first to check on her." He took Ide's hand, and Light just waved for them to go away, laughing.

"Have fun, you two. Am I right to assume there's a pretty good chance you'll end up eloping on this trip?"

"Yes." They both said in synch, looked at each other, and then laughed as they hurried inside. Light smiled fondly towards them and looked up at Ryuk.

"I'm glad there isn't much damage. Aizawa should be okay," he took off his shoes and left them inside, walking in the sand and towards the dock, looking out at the terrain around them. Dark green evergreen trees surrounded the lake on all ends, hiding it from the rest of the world. He could see the occasional cabin scattered about and noticed the outline of a cluster of them at the other end of the lake. "It's so quiet." He sat down, dipping his feet in the cold waters.

Ryuk decided to sit down with Light, noticing there was some concern hidden behind that smile. "Whatcha thinking about?"

"With the information that I have," Light mused, "Aizawa only attacked when he woke up because he had been in danger when he had passed out initially. He was behaving like a wounded animal, basically... so he shouldn't be dangerous, though I guess if he's in a dangerous situation would be the only true way to tell, and I don't know how we can ethically test that."

"But?"

"I'm still worried about Beyond Birthday," Light explained. "He's half-Shinigami, which means he would probably be able to have the same powers I do if he put his mind to it. If I can control Aizawa, that means Beyond Birthday might be able to as well."

"I don't think so, actually," Ryuk said, "All Shinigami, while similar, are different. Your magic's the one that connects Shuichi to Shinigami at all, so you are probably the only one who could do that."

"So I'm probably the only one who can put him back to normal too."

"I doubt that's possible," Ryuk replied. "And think about it. He was dealing with a head injury, don't those mess up humans? You may have just made his life easier this way. Besides, we still don't know if he's still impacted by his lifespan, so the possibility of immortality isn't really a concern yet. No use worrying about something that's not gonna have any outcome for decades."

"Yeah...you're right." He looked down at the water moving around his feet. "Besides, it's not like Beyond Birthday's ever going to rise from the sea again. We'll be fine."

He stayed out on the dock for a few hours to give Aizawa and Ide some alone time, pulling up his jeans to stand on the ladder into the water.

He didn't notice how much time had passed until he heard Dad's voice. "Hey. Matsuda and I grabbed something to eat while we were out, so you and Ide are probably going to scrounge for food tonight. Is that okay?"

Light looked up, "Oh, yeah. Of course. How was going into town?"

"Not much has changed from when I was young," he looked up at the dark night sky, a wistful smile on his face as he looked up at the shooting stars, the wind gently blowing his hair, which Light had rarely seen not slicked back. "The stars always were so beautiful here."

Light looked over Dad's body language. "...Are you going to visit your family while you're here?"

"Oh, no. I'd hate to busy my nephews when they have kids of their own and Mother's in Seattle right now." He sat down with Light. "I never thought I would come back here when not for a funeral..." he sighed, and Light looked away.

"You're thinking about Claudia, aren't you?"

"Yeah..." he wiped his eyes. "Your mother and I actually brought you down here when you were three months old before Ryuk arrived. Tried to have some fun as a family... but she ended up being too sick..." he shook himself. "I'm glad... that you were able to save Aizawa. I don't know what I would have done if we lost him." Light pulled his knees up to his chest, and Dad's brow furrowed. "What's wrong, son?"

"I just... I feel like I'm doing something wrong," he explained. "All humans are supposed to die; I had accepted that since before I could walk. I had accepted it, so to get so frantic trying to save a human life, and that could have gone so badly..."

"It's called being human, Light," Dad replied. "You can accept that humans are going to die all you would like, but that doesn't mean the idea of never seeing someone again isn't painful. So just because you accept it up here," he tapped Light's head before moving down to his heart, "Doesn't mean you accept it here. Always be grateful for having a human heart, even if that means feeling pain. The alternative is to

feel nothing at all. But remember what I told you, Light. You have no control over who lives and who dies. I have a feeling if Aizawa had truly been meant to die, this situation wouldn't have happened the way it did."

"I guess you're right," Light replied, and Dad then asked,

"Light, why are you so determined to just accept that all humans die and act detached from that? It's not just about your powers, this has been a thing since you were a baby."

Light tensed. "I..." should he do it? He looked up at Ryuk before taking a deep breath and digging into his satchel, revealing the Death Note. "This is why." He passed it to Dad, who took the notebook, lurching when he saw Ryuk.

"What the—" he had to stop himself from falling off the dock, looking at the notebook with wide eyes. "What is this?" He opened the notebook and read over the rules. "The human whose name is written in this notebook shall..." he looked at the pages, noticing Light's handwriting, but there were very few names written within. "Light?"

"The Death Note," Light couldn't bring himself to meet Dad's eyes. "That's how Ryuk became part of my life, as an experiment to raise a human with the notebook's power since the beginning. I have to write a name every 490 days because neither of us wants to know what the memory loss of losing ownership would do to me after this long. But I only do criminals, like making sure executions go successfully, or to save lives like in a hostage situation."

He waited for Dad's reaction to this information, shaking as he feared rejection from one of the only people he valued the opinion of.

He didn't know what he had been expecting, but to be pulled into a tight embrace was not it. Light slipped the Death Note back into his satchel and returned the embrace.

"Let's not tell your mother about this," Dad whispered, "She's accepted Ryuk, but this might give her a heart attack."

"And...how are you feeling about this?"

"On the brink of a heart attack." He replied while still holding onto Light. "I'm calm right now, but I'll probably need a drink when we go back inside."

"So you're not mad?"

"You've been careful," Dad admitted, "As unhappy as I am that you've been put in a place where you need to kill, it could be much worse...it's not very many names at all." He was right; there were only twenty-three names. "Your secret is safe with me. Besides, any secrets revealed at the lake stay at the lake."

Light relaxed fully, resting his head on Dad's shoulders and holding onto him a little tighter. "Thanks, Dad. No more secrets, okay?"

Dad nodded. "No more secrets. We'll get through this together."

OoOoO

In the dead Shinigami Realm, Zellogi was bored. This was nothing new, as everyone had been bored so long that they hadn't had a name for the feeling until recently.

That is, until Ryuk's experiment. And suddenly, a spark had lit in the minds of all Shinigami, seeing their youngest brother raising a human like his own child. They had all made bets on how long until Ryuk gave his life for that human, but it never happened, and the King had even given permission for Ryuk to teach the human magic!

"I don't see why we should let Ryuk have all the fun," Zellogi sneered as he stood up, picking up the Death Note as another of their siblings wasted away to dust without any motivation to write names.

Gelus briefly looked up from the observation hole he rarely spent any time away from. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that Ryuk's little experiment made him climb the ranks so fast that he managed to be equal to Nu! And he's teaching his pet magic that none of us have even seen before."

"What do you plan to do?" Rem asked. "I fail to see what the point of your rant is unless you have plans of going down there to see the human world for yourself."

"Wouldn't have done it before," Zellogi said, "But it's certainly better than staying here any longer." He turned to leave, and Gelus hesitantly

asked.

"So...you think I can go and talk to her? Before it's too late." Oh, that's right, the human Gelus cared for so deeply was going to die in a few months.

"I don't see why not." Zellogi replied as he turned to leave, and Gelus quickly followed as he decided he wanted to meet Misa Amane.

Rem glanced down at the observation hole at Ryuk and his experiment. She had never thought anything of humans besides they were vile creatures, but she had to admit she was curious about what would come of what was soon to happen. How would this Light Yagami boy react to other humans with the Death Note?

Should she go with Zellogi and Gelus to wherever they were going? She decided against it. Maybe if something happened that made her want to join in, she would, but she was content to watch for now, already wondering what was going to happen now.

# Chapter 25

"Today, at approximately 11am, a 32-year-old man was found stabbed to death in his apartment in Kyoto. The police are treating this case as a homicide."

Misa grimaced as she heard the daily news on her walk through the city, putting her headphones on to drown out the dreary reminder of the injustice in the world. It had been months now, and still, her parents' murderer hadn't faced any justice! It seemed not even her celebrity status could hurry along this lazy justice system, how long did it take to prosecute one guy when she had witnessed the whole thing?!

She focused on her music, humming along as she headed home, carrying her cup of strawberry bubble tea as she headed inside. She probably had two hours before her next photoshoot, so she may as well get ready ahead of time.

When she headed into her bedroom, she was surprised to find a black notebook on her vanity. She examined the writing on it, not recognizing the language, which caused a rush of excitement as she picked up the notebook and found there were rules inside that were in English.

"How to use it: the human whose name is written in this notebook… shall die!" Her eyes widened as she realized what that could mean if it was true. She doubted it was real, but she loved the occult, so the idea of a notebook with the power to kill people was awesome!

Maybe there was something wrong with her for getting excited at such an idea, but this was the perfect opportunity! If the justice system wasn't going to get rid of the man who ruined her life, she could do it herself.

She paused as she thought about it. She didn't want to get her hopes up in the event this was some weird joke, and she had seen enough true crime documentaries to know killing someone she knew, especially who she would have the motive to kill, would just get her caught.

Thinking about it some more, she turned on the television. There was always news about some criminal, and if she wanted to know the results of her test immediately, that was the best way to get

information. She glanced at the rest of the rules while she waited for a test subject.

"This note will not take effect unless the writer has the person's face in their mind when writing their name. Therefore, people sharing the same name will not be affected... If the cause of death is written within 40 seconds of writing the person's name, it will happen. If the cause of death is not specified, the person will simply die of a heart attack. After writing the cause of death, details of the death should be written in the next 6 minutes and 40 seconds. Hmm, so depending on the person you have in mind, you can either kill them easily or painfully..." she grinned, momentarily contemplating in what way she would use to kill with this notebook if it was real. Sadly, she knew it made sense to use the heart attack default.

She groaned as she leaned her head on her desk. Why did potentially killing people who deserved it have to be so hard? If she decided to do a lot of this, she had to be careful.

She snapped up as she heard a police report about a hostage situation in the local mall, and she instantly knew she had her chance. She didn't even hear the name before she had written it down on the paper, deciding to have some fun with this and write down that this one was a suicide, checking the digital clock on her nightstand. Even if she got attention, if she continued to do this, at least this couldn't be traced back to her. Besides, people in hostage situations killed themselves enough that it wouldn't be suspicious.

Kuro, her cat, came into the room and jumped onto her lap. She brightened as she pet him. "Hey, Kuro. Have you had a good day? I think I'm about to have a good one."

She checked her clock again, getting impatient. This had to be the longest forty seconds of her life.

Just as she was about to give up hope, her eyes widened when she heard the panicked reporters. "Wait, we see something here! Looks like there's movement at the front entrance!"

"The hostages are coming out, and they all look to be unharmed! The Special Forces are taking action; they're moving in! We don't know if the suspect's been arrested. Huh? Yes? Okay, we now have confirmation. The suspect has been found dead inside! I repeat the suspect is now dead!"

Her eyes lit up with excitement. "Dead?"

"The Special Forces deny allegations that they shot the suspect."

"So, it's quite possible he was feeling cornered and decided to commit suicide?"

"That appears to be the case according to statements from the hostages."

The notebook was real. Misa looked at it again as an almost crazed grin formed on her face. She heard movement from her closet and turned in surprise to find some sort of small patched-up doll sitting on her bed.

"Hello," the doll said, "Sorry for hiding in your closet. I wanted to see how you reacted to the Death Note before talking to you."

Misa spun around in her chair, noticing Kuro didn't have any reaction to the doll. Normally when there was someone new, he would try to investigate. "Who are you?" She asked curiously, and the doll suddenly grew anxious.

"Oh, uh...I'm Gelus, and I'm a Shinigami. That notebook was mine, and I decided to give it to you."

"Hm?" She grinned. "Well, Gelus, I'm Misa! So am I allowed to do whatever I want with the Death Note, or should I give it back to you?"

"You can do whatever you want," Gelus said, "As long as you follow the rules in the notebook and don't harm the experiment."

Misa's brow furrowed. "Experiment?"

"Oh, I should probably explain," Gelus sat up a bit. "There are two other Shinigami in the human world besides me. Zellogi came down when I did and will be selecting a human as well. The first Shinigami to come down here was our youngest brother, Ryuk. Over seventeen years ago, he began an experiment of raising a baby named Light Yagami to have Shinigami powers. The King is very fond of Light, so any harm to him is against the rules."

"Light Yagami?" She frowned, deep in thought. "I've heard that name before." She headed over to her computer, placing Kuro on the bed next to Gelus. Kuro sniffed curiously around the area Gelus was in while Misa looked up Light Yagami. She had heard his name before! That was the boy who graduated high school at eleven, solved cases for the police, and was part of a kidnapping not long ago. "Looking at

all of this, I'm not surprised he was raised by a Shinigami. Moon Night God..." she giggled. "Yep. That is pretty fitting." She glanced over at Gelus. "He's the son of the NPA Superintendent, so that means the police are probably aware about his abilities and don't care, right?"

"That seems to be the case," Gelus replied. Misa brightened, clapping her hands together.

"Alright, that settles it! I might still have to deal with someone like L eventually, but if I'm careful, I won't get caught!" She glanced back at the reports. "I need to find out for sure if Light's going to be on my side or not. I'll treat him as neutral for now, but I really hope he is on my side."

She shook herself. That didn't matter for right now. It would be an important issue she needed to determine later, but for right now, the only thing that mattered was dealing with criminals. That shouldn't be too hard given the news, and she had access to NHN whenever she wanted.

Nobody was going to suffer like she did. If she eliminated all criminals, surely people would stop committing crimes, right? It made sense that she could change the world this way, so as she turned her focus back to the news and started writing down names, she slipped the name of her parents' murderer into the bunch alongside a few other preexisting criminals she knew of.

And if she had begun specifying "painful" with the heart attacks, nobody had to know.

OoOoO

Why did cram school have to be so boring? He already knew all of this stuff and could probably refresh himself better with his books. He really needed to ask Dad to let him drop out, but he always forgot about it when Dad got home.

He thought back to what Dad had told him he learned about Aizawa's condition while they had been on the field. In general, he wasn't dangerous, and besides his unusual eating and sleeping habits, he could still be mistaken for a normal person. When he was attacked, it led to some questions of his humanity, as he started behaving exactly

like he did in the hospital. Thankfully, without fail, Ide managed to calm him down once the danger was gone, and it had to be real danger and not just a threat of danger, so it shouldn't be too much of a problem. If anyone who didn't know the secret saw it, they could probably say it was a fight or flight response.

He was pulled from his musings when he heard the sound of motorcycles. Some sort of biker gang, perhaps? He noticed the bikers surrounding a young woman who had been a few paces ahead of him. He grimaced as he heard the way they were talking.

"What's up, little lady?" The ringleader said, "The name's Takuo Shibuimaru. What do ya say? Come hang out with us, pretty lady."

"Please, I don't want any trouble." The woman begged, and Light headed into the store. What kind of idiot said their name in full like that? It was like he was just asking for someone like Light to kill him. He grabbed a manga from the shelf and quickly used it to hide the Death Note page he always kept with him, testing six different spellings. If none of these worked to kill this bastard in a traffic accident, Light could just as easily do it himself.

Killing was impatient, but if this guy was allowed to live, he was just going to keep hurting people. And since sexual assault cases were rarely prosecuted anyway, this was the only way he could ensure that guy faced justice. When he had explained that thought process of killing the criminals that the justice system couldn't do anything about, Dad had reluctantly understood his logic.

Light watched the chaos impassively, putting the manga down and hurrying after that woman, who was shaking in fear. "Hey, are you alright?"

She looked up in shock, nodding mostly to herself. "Yeah...I'm fine." He offered out his hand for her to take to help her up.

"Do you want me to walk you home? I'm Light."

She nervously glanced back at where that gang had been. "I'm Aimi... yeah, I'd appreciate the help if it's not too much trouble."

"It's no trouble at all." They started walking, and Light let her lead the way. He decided to make conversation. "So, were you headed home from cram school?"

"Yeah," she pulled her jacket tighter around herself. "I want to get into

the Tokyo Institute of Technology, so I'll need to score well on the entrance exams." She looked up at him, "What about you?"

"Probably Todai University," Light replied. "It's not far from my house, and it offers the psychology and political science courses I've been planning to take."

Matsuda had joked Light should be a coroner for the police since he could solve cases just by touching a dead body, and while Light supposed that was an option, he hadn't forgotten about his goals as a child to change laws to help better the world. And for that, he needed a better understanding of politics, and Dad mentioned understanding human psychology was always beneficial.

He was surprised to find that Aimi's house was only a few houses down from his, and he waved her goodbye as he headed home. "Well, I guess that takes care of my 490 days for the time being."

"Are you gonna tell Soichiro about it?"

"It depends," Light replied, "I'm not just going to spring it on him, but if he asks I'll tell him."

When he got home, he was surprised to find Dad home early. "Oh, hey, Dad. Where are Mother and Sayu?"

"Your mother is picking up Sayu from a late-night study session with a friend. Have you heard about the recent deaths of criminals?"

Light sat down and started eating his own dinner that was waiting for him. "I heard some students mention it during cram school. I was going to try and learn more about it. Do you know anything?"

"Well," he gestured to Light's Death Note that he noticed was sitting on the table. "I've been reading the rules in your notebook, and the killings line up with the default death of heart attacks. I'm not accusing you, but do you think it's possible someone else could have a notebook?"

Ryuk cackled as he enjoyed an apple. "I always knew it was only a matter of time."

"What do you mean?" Light asked. "You think another Shinigami has an experiment like with me?"

"I doubt it was an experiment," Ryuk replied, "Because if it's what

Soichiro says, that's not a toddler, and trust me, if the others were raising babies, they'd've asked for my help by now."

"So someone else has a Death Note..." Light considered all the possibilities. "If the Death Note is discovered by any government, that could cause disaster and all kinds of wars. They'll all want that power for themselves."

"That's exactly what I was worried about," Dad said. "L is already on the case; I just got back from the Interpol meeting. I'm not too concerned he would be interested in that power, but I'd hate to think about would happen if any government got their hands on it."

"How are the police going to fight against this if we don't know what we're dealing with?" Light asked worriedly. "The only people who know about the Death Note are the two of us, and even if we count Aizawa, Ide, Matsuda, Mogi, and Ukita, will that be enough to figure out what's going on?"

"I don't know," Dad stood up, "But we have to try, don't we? We can't let the killings keep going on like this. Innocent people who have been likely wrongfully condemned are dying!"

"I know..." Light sighed. "Looks like we'll have to form our own investigation without L knowing anything..." he thought back to his conversation with the detective about possibly working with him when he was eighteen, which was coming up in a couple months. He stood up. "Well, this is one hell of an excuse to drop out of cram school."

Dad rolled his eyes as he made a move to make some coffee and was stirring a bowl of what seemed to be some sort of baked good as a snack. "Get some pajamas on unless you want to work and potentially pass out in your jeans. We have a long night ahead of us."

OoOoO

As L looked over the NPA members who were willing to be part of the Kira task force, he decided that none of this was going to be necessary. He could already tell most of these men would leave as soon as they proved to be in danger or because they didn't trust him.

He already knew exactly who he wanted on the Kira task force. After working with them when B had kidnapped Light, he already knew all of them could handle the supernatural or threats to their lives. These were the men he wanted to work with.

Then he got an idea. Could he use this as an excuse to work with Light early? He wasn't quite eighteen yet, but L had never lost his fascination with the young man. Especially after B escaped prison, he was last seen trying to attack Light and his friend Yamamoto, and B was never seen again, with Light supposedly found in a tree. What had happened that day?

And now, with a new mysterious killer with an MO so jarring that he was already suspecting there were two, L knew that someone like Light would be the person able to solve this case with him, and he could be around Light for long periods and learn more about him. There must be some secret that he was keeping.

Satisfied with his decision, L made the call for Watari. "Watari, I know who I wish to work with on the Kira task force. Please inform them shortly, and ask for them to meet me here tomorrow evening. And if they could bring Light Yagami, that would be appreciated."

*"Of course, L."*

# Chapter 26

Aizawa made a show of yawning as he continued working on this new missing person investigation. How had it taken three years for anyone to know this girl was missing? If the lover was this abusive, surely that was the obvious culprit.

He could feel the eyes of his coworkers watching him, and he pushed the sunglasses closer to his eyes. It was just a sensitivity to bright lights; that's what Soichiro had told the other investigators about why Aizawa was always wearing sunglasses. If only that was the case, because what would happen when they couldn't use that excuse anymore? Colored contacts didn't work because they were just kind of irritating.

Actually, why was he worrying so much? It had been a few months since the change, and nobody questioned anything. He typically only worked with Ide anyway, and people had gotten used to what they believed he and Ide did in the broom closet. Investigators or not, nobody was going to notice. Still, he would rather be safe when it came to his lack of food or sleep.

Sometimes he looked back on his life and how he got into this situation, and he couldn't help but wonder how agreeing to babysit the superintendent's son seventeen years ago had left him where he was now. Even if he wasn't really complaining, it was both parts amusing and fascinating how this one choice had shaped his life so much.

He heard the door open, and Ide came in. "Suzuki, it's late. We should wrap it up for the night. We won't be able to do anything productive without proper rest." It was nearly midnight, which was the shift Aizawa and Ide had begun preferring more than usual since it meant they could work at night while Yumi would be asleep since they did live together and were Yumi's parents. They would be home before she headed to school.

Suzuki hesitated. "Aizawa should get some rest as well."

"I will," Aizawa said, turning only slightly. "Goodnight."

"Goodnight, Captain," Suzuki said, hurrying out. Ide smiled and came over, kissing Aizawa's cheek.

"How's the investigation going?"

"To the surprise of nobody on these kinds of cases," Aizawa muttered darkly, "The lover probably did it."

Even thinking about it... he shuddered, knowing that if Ide had been even a few minutes later, he could have died from his head injury, and not even Light would have been able to save him. He could have ended up as one of these cases that he worked.

Ukita looked up from his investigations into the construction done on the butcher shop the lover's family had owned then torn down. "You're not going to be sleeping, are you?"

"No, probably not," Aizawa replied. He shrugged. "I'll find something to do."

All three of them turned, and Mogi came in. "The Chief wants to see us."

"Hm?" All three looked at each other and followed Mogi into Soichiro's office, finding him looking tired like he hadn't slept last night. Matsuda was already in the office, and in the corner was...Watari. Aizawa immediately went on high alert. What was going on?

Ide squeezed his hand, and he felt himself relax slightly. Surely Watari and therefore L hadn't figured out anything. There was nothing to worry about.

"Chief, can you tell us what's going on now?" Matsuda asked eagerly, and Aizawa found himself mildly surprised. He could sense the heartbeat and every little detail of everyone now. He knew when people were lying more than he already did, yet... if he didn't have that ability, he would have no way of knowing Matsuda's cheer was fake, and he was actually incredibly nervous.

"You all have heard about the Kira case," Soichiro said softly. "The reason I have not already put as many people as possible onto the investigation is that L planned to personally select members of the NPA, which turned out to be the six of us who investigated Light's kidnapping, and Light himself." He sighed as he glanced at the computer in the corner of the room. "L, if all of us are going to work together on this investigation, and if you truly meant what you said about trusting the six of us as well as Light, could you come here so we can all meet in person?"

*"The thought had already crossed my mind,"* L said through the computer. *"After all, I did say that I trusted all of you, which is why you were personally selected. May I ask why Light is not here?"*

"He's studying for the entrance exams," Soichiro replied. "And I am not sure I am comfortable having him on this investigation for the time being. We'll see. Depending on arrangements, I may bring him by the next meeting."

*"That would be ideal. Please keep what is about to happen a secret between the nine of us. I would like to meet the six of you whom I trust as soon as possible. Before that, I want you all to go outside of the police building and decide once more if you trust me or not."*

"Alright..." Soichiro muttered, and the six of them headed out. Once they were alone, he turned to Aizawa. "Aizawa, will you be okay to work the investigation? We know who L is, and we know he's likely going to notice your eyes whether you wear contacts or not. We have to assume he will find out about that."

"Well, head trauma can change eye color," Ukita pointed out. "I looked it up so we could have an excuse. Sure, gold is kinda strange, but that's way more likely than resuscitation with dark magic."

"Good point," Matsuda brightened. "Especially since he did have that ever since waking up."

"Sounds kind of like bullshit," Aizawa chuckled, sticking his hands in his pockets. And now all of his concerns were gone, now that he had some sort of excuse for his eyes. "But why not? It's not like he can prove anything else about me."

"I wouldn't normally trust L," Ide said, and he held Aizawa's hand. "But I might as well stay. We can all agree Light's somehow involved in this whole Kira thing, right?"

...

"Right..." Soichiro glanced around to make sure they were alone. If they were going to be working on this case, they all needed to be on the same page about what Light knew that L couldn't know until they could be sure he was trustworthy. "Light knows exactly what Kira's

powers are, and that's why I am reluctant to have him on the task force, so he can have his own investigation. However, I talked to L after the kidnapping, and he has wanted to work with Light for a long time. I don't think he's going to let this go easily." He glanced at Mogi, seeing that he wanted to say something but wasn't sure if he should contribute. "Do you have any input, Mogi?"

Mogi nodded. "I think it's a good idea to have Light involved. Keep L happy in that regard, and if Light's going to be working on his own anyway, there's no reason for him to do all the work alone when we could help out. He's been keeping his secret for years, and we only found out because of necessity."

"Good point," Soichiro glanced at everyone, and he smiled. They had all come a long way from the children he had seen grow into the men before him. "Alright, so we'll bring Light as well?"

Nods from everyone, and Soichiro headed to the car to get more instructions from Watari.

Soichiro could practically hear L's smile when he was told Light would be brought onto the task force tonight. *"I am staying in a suite at the Teito Hotel at the moment. But I'll be switching hotels every few days from this point on. I want you to think of these hotels as the de facto headquarters of the investigation. If this arrangement is acceptable to all of you, split into two groups, and stagger your arrival, so you come thirty minutes apart. Please arrange it so you'll all be here at midnight."*

"Alright." He turned back to the task force. "Mogi, Ukita, you'll be with me. Matsuda, Aizawa, Ide, you can go get Light."

Everyone collectively agreed and went their separate ways. Soichiro checked his watch. He had a little under an hour to make it to the hotel not far from here.

He sighed. Was this going to be it? After all these years trying to keep Light's secret, was this investigation going to be the thing to make his and Sachiko's worst fears come true of someone who shouldn't finding out Light's secret? As much as he wanted to trust L and was confident L didn't want to harm Light, how much did he really know about the detective?

He forced himself to relax. Everything would be fine. Light was a brilliant kid; he would be able to keep his secret. And Light had power over memory, so he could easily erase L's memory if he proved to be untrustworthy.

With luck, Kira would be found by the end of the year.

OoOoO

Light flipped through the grimoire in his room when Sayu came in, bounding over to him and looking down at the book. "Are you doing more magic?"

"Kind of," Light replied, leaning back in his desk chair. "I need to know everything I can about Kira to solve the case." He brightened as he got an idea. "Hey, Sayu, I'm gonna need your help."

A broad grin formed on Sayu's face. "My help on a big case!?" Light nodded, grinning. He knew how much she wanted to be a police officer, so letting her be involved in the safe parts of the case would always be a good way to feel needed.

"I'm not in public school, so I can't do this myself. I need you to investigate the general public opinion of Kira and any rumors about his power or perhaps celebrities that endorse Kira. Or anything that could count as clues."

"I can do that!" Sayu then frowned. "Do we know Kira's powerset? That might make investigating a little easier."

Light smirked, standing up and ruffling Sayu's hair. "Do you want me to just tell you the answer, or do you want to try and find it out for yourself?"

"I'll figure it out myself!" Sayu insisted, bounding off to her room. "I have a lot of investigating to prepare for!"

Ryuk grinned lazily from where he was sitting on Light's bed. "You're good at making her feel included."

"Yeah," Light looked back at the grimoire. "I like spending time with her, but I'm gonna be busy with this case." He huffed. "I need to figure out where Kira is to start with. Somewhere in Japan is certain, but it looks like the killings didn't main in any particular place." He looked back at the book. "Honestly, without knowing about the Death Note, I would have thought this could be some sort of government-engineered prion. Hm..."

He heard a knock on his door, and Mother came in. "Matsuda, Aizawa, and Ide are here to see you," she said. Light spun around in his chair as Matsuda came in.

"Light! L wants you on the task force."

Light found he wasn't surprised by that. He remembered his conversation with L, and he would be eighteen in only a few months, so he could see it coming. And...he had been getting a bit impatient with his own damn boundary. He had been wanting to meet L for so long and then insisted on waiting?!

So it seemed Kira's appearance had some perks to it after all. But before anything else, he glanced at Aizawa, who was standing in the door. "So do you have an excuse for the eyes?"

"Yeah," Aizawa replied. "Do you have those sleeping remedies? It might not bug me normally, but I'll need to show genuine signs of exhaustion with a world class detective."

Light huffed. "I haven't been able to figure that out yet. I'll get back to you on that, so just drink a lot of coffee to give reason for not being tired."

"I can do that," Aizawa said. "So ready to go? We need to be there in about twenty minutes."

Light's eyes widened, and he hurried over to his closet so he could be wearing something that wasn't his pajamas. He ended up in jeans and a dark grey hoodie. "Okay, let's get going," he said, combing his fingers through his hair to slightly tame his bedhead.

Ide rolled his eyes when he got a look at Light. "How much did you ruin your sleep schedule last night?"

"A lot," Light replied simply. "Stayed up all night with Dad and then collapsed around 10am since I didn't sleep much the night before this either, and woke up at dinner. I'll probably be up all night."

"Well, that's convenient," Matsuda yawned. "Can we stop for coffee? Ide and I are probably gonna need it even if Aizawa doesn't sleep."

"Hey," Aizawa snapped, "Just because I don't sleep doesn't mean I won't continue my coffee addiction."

"Ah, true." Matsuda laughed as he waved goodbye to Mother. "I

wonder how L's gonna react to all of us. We didn't really interact last time we worked together."

"It's certainly going to be interesting," Light said, looking up at Ryuk. "Don't worry, Ryuk, we'll get you an apple."

"I am still not used to that," Aizawa groaned. "Being debatably undead? Fine. But actually being able to see Ryuk is something I don't think I will ever adjust to."

As they all stopped to get coffee, Light's mind began to wander. He had only met L once. What would working with him be like? Did he still suspect Light was hiding something? He grinned. Actually...it would be pretty fun if L did still suspect something was different about him. Hiding his secret from the world's greatest detective and solving the Kira case? It certainly sounded interesting.

When they made it to the hotel together, Light knocked on L's door, hearing, "It's open!" from inside. He found his heart was racing with excitement. He wanted to know everything there was to know about L, and he wasn't worried about his secret. He had nothing to worry about, so why not be excited?

He opened the door.

# Chapter 27

"It's been a while, Light."

Light brightened at the sight of L, realizing the rest of the task force, except for Dad, had never actually seen L in person before and were taken aback by his unkempt appearance. But Light wasn't put off by L at all, his hands in his pockets as he smirked.

"I see you couldn't keep your promise, sir." He said teasingly, and he and L locked eyes as they both tried to determine what the other was thinking. L's gaze didn't leave Light for even a second after his initial glance at the rest of the task force.

"Rest assured, I had planned to," L replied casually, "But I don't see why I should wait until February 28th when we could have the case solved by then."

Light shrugged, knowing that L was right, but he was never going to admit that. L turned towards the main room of his suite. "Shall we begin?" He gestured to the coffee table. "Please turn off all your cellphones, handhelds, and any other communication devices and leave them on the table right there."

"What? Do you think we're gonna be using our cellphones during this meeting to leak information?" Ide snapped. Dad sighed.

"It's all right; just do as he says."

They all put their phones down on the table, but Light found himself genuinely curious why this precaution existed. He already knew everyone on the task force and was even showing his face.

"I know he's been cautious since the very beginning," Matsuda mused, "But I still can't tell if he trusts us or not."

"No, I just find them distracting." L replied as he sat down. "I can't stand it when people's cellphones are ringing while I'm trying to talk." Ah, that made sense. Light had to admit that while in cram school, it had been infuriating whenever someone's cell phone went off. He entered the main room and sat down on the couch as L finally looked up at the others. "Let me start by saying nobody takes notes on anything that's said in these meetings. That means when we leave headquarters, any information is committed to memory."

"That works for me," Light said, leaning a bit closer to L, and he maintained his relaxed demeanor even when he noticed L's gaze moving towards Aizawa before gesturing to the seats.

"Please, make yourselves comfortable."

As everyone got situated, L started pouring a cup of coffee for himself, taking a sip before adding a few sugar cubes. His gaze flickered towards everyone again, and Light noticed Ide's momentary panic as L glanced at Aizawa again. Matsuda was the one to get L's attention,

"Excuse me, L?"

L glanced at Matsuda. "From now on, I'll have to ask that you stop calling me L. It's Ryuzaki now, just to be safe."

Ryuk laughed. "Looks like he's still using the alias." Light let a smile slip out, knowing the truth about L's name. He had wondered for a year about L's name and why L was his name, and he hoped he would be able to ask eventually. However, he knew that would take a long time, and he needed to focus on the investigation and figure out who owned the new Death Note.

Matsuda blinked. "Uh, okay, Ryuzaki...I know we don't know much about Kira just yet, but can we get a rundown on what we do know?"

Light turned. "Well, from the looks of things in my own research, Kira needs a face and a name to kill. The face thing is pretty obvious, and as for the name, criminals in the media who didn't have their names revealed, or were spelled incorrectly, have not been targeted."

"That is a very astute observation, Light." L said. "And to hear you were investigating this on your own?" He leaned forward, a grin on his face. "Should I consider you one of my suspects? Do you, by any chance, have a personal investment in this case?"

Light turned to completely face L, returning the grin. "I'd certainly make a more interesting chase."

L blinked. He didn't seem to expect Light's reaction but immensely enjoyed it. "That much you already proved to me."

Light felt Dad tense up, and he squeezed Dad's hand assuringly. He knew what he was doing; there was nothing to worry about.

Matsuda glanced awkwardly at the eye contact and matching grins

Light and L had towards each other. "Well, if we know that he needs a name and a face to kill, couldn't we cut down on the number of victims by keeping criminals' names from the news?"

L turned back to Matsuda. "If we do that, we may only be putting the general public at risk."

"The general public?" Ukita asked, and Aizawa crossed his arms.

"Why?"

"The difficulty of this case lies in its unprecedented scope." L explained. "And make no mistake. We are witnessing an atrocious act of mass murder. Now, I chose Japan to come to because whether the guilty party is an individual or a group, there's a strong possibility they are Japanese. And even if they are not, we can be sure they are hiding in Japan."

Light pouted playfully. "And here I thought you just wanted an excuse to see me."

"That too," L admitted. "Though I will admit no matter where Kira operated, odds are I would have called upon this group. You all worked against Beyond Birthday, who seems to have some tie to this investigation. I knew him personally, and one thing he mentioned to me before all of this kidnapping nonsense is that he could see peoples' names and their lifespans."

"Yeah...he mentioned something like that to me when I was kidnapped." Light straightened, panic for the first time setting in. "Wait, you don't think—"

"I wouldn't know. After all, Light, you were the last person to ever see him."

*Ah, so that's the game L is playing in mentioning Beyond Birthday.* Light mused. *It's not about whether it's Beyond Birthday at all. In fact, we can both confidently say it's not him since, by that logic, he knows L's name, so if he somehow escaped the ocean and it is him, L would probably be dead by now. L just wants to know what role I had in his disappearance.*

"However, I sincerely hope it's not the case," L said after realizing Light wasn't going to explain what happened to Beyond Birthday. "Because odds are he knows my name, so if I provoke Kira like I desire to, I will die."

"Though given you're still alive, that means if it is him, he wants you alive, and if it's not, you're safe." Aizawa said, and L nodded.

"What is all this based on?" Dad asked worriedly. "Wouldn't it make sense the culprit is Beyond Birthday? That would mean Light is in danger and should not be working this case."

"Actually, it's the opposite." Light explained. "If he's going after me, I'll be safer working with L, since I'll be spending a large portion of my time protected."

L nodded. "That's right. And to answer the question about Japan, I think I will be able to provide you with proof of that after I directly confront the culprit."

"A direct confontation?" Ide asked skeptically. "Surely revealing your face to Kira is only going to end in your death."

"Perhaps I should rephrase. When I say direct, I mean as close to direct as I typically am. This means we'll be using the media to draw him out."

"But how?" Ukita asked, and L grinned.

"You'll see. And if my current plan works, not only will we get a feel for how Kira operates, but we'll have an idea of how to proceed next. Before we go any further, I have to be absolutely sure none of you are Kira," his gaze lingered on Light. "So I'll need to speak to each of you individually before you leave today."

Aizawa was clearly growing annoyed. "What's the deal? You still don't trust us?"

"You don't have to think of it that way," L said. "It could be I wish to know those who I am working alongside. When I work with someone, I need to know how they tick and what makes them function; I can identify any abnormalities."

"When you put it that way," Dad sighed. "It's a fair request."

"Alright," L stood up. "Shall we begin?"

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Light was the last person to be spoken to. After all, always save the best for last. Maybe now he would finally get some clear answers out of the young man. The rest of the task force didn't seem to know L was aware of the strange supernatural happenings in Light's life. Perhaps that would have made them easier to talk to if he had told them he knew something about it.

Light came in, very nonchalant and almost excited. Through the reflection in the window, L observed his gait and noticed that he had remarkably recovered from his surgery last year. He had the smallest limp but nothing that impaired him whatsoever.

"So, what do you want to talk about?" Light asked. L turned away from the window, offering Light a seat. Watari had a point that he had to ease Light into the questions and not bombard him with them as much as he wanted to. He wondered how long he would be able to keep that standard up after so long waiting to ask Light about everything.

"From what I determined with the task force," L said, "If you are my ally, I have nothing to worry about. But if you are my enemy..."

"Good thing I'm not your enemy then," Light said, taking one of the cups off the table and drinking from it. "You clearly have questions for me."

"You have no idea how many." L sat down, hoping that Light would remain as open as he was right now. "Let's start with the most currently relevant one. What's going on with Aizawa?"

"It's unclear," Light admitted. "Our main theory is it can be attributed to a head injury a few months ago." He adjusted how he was sitting. "I assume your next question involves Beyond Birthday?"

"You are correct."

"I hope he's dead." Light sneered at his coffee, even thinking about his kidnapper. "I fought him after he attempted to kill my..." he stopped, as though reminding himself of something. "My friend. I passed out not long after, and I don't know where he is now."

L considered what Light was saying. He highly doubted Light didn't know where B was, so he tried a different tactic.

"You did admit to supernatural happenings in your childhood," L reminded him. "You've already said that much, so there's no need to

hide anything."

Light looked up from his coffee. "Alright, I'll put it this way. You don't want to know what I did to him."

*No, Light, I truly do want to know.* "Did you kill him?"

"No."

L paused as he and Light made eye contact. So he *did* know where B was. His excitement, if possible, grew even more. He hadn't sensed any deceit in Light's body language, meaning that Light was a remarkable liar, just like him.

"I do not believe you are Kira," L said finally. "However, I am confident you know something about this investigation that you are not telling me." he leaned forward, "Would you perhaps like to enlighten me?"

"Not particuarly," Light said. "Do you plan to investigate that when we could focus on catching Kira?"

"And what's to stop me from investigating you at the same time?" L asked, cocking his head with a teasing grin. "Does someone plan to send me to an early grave?"

"Of course not, it would be no fun," Light said, leaning forward as well. "So shall we actually work on this investigation? I'm quite curious if my theories are correct, aren't you?"

Oh, Light's knowledge was clearly more than just theories, but L decided to play along. This was going to be by far his most enjoyable investigation. "I look forward to working with you, Light."

# Chapter 28

"I'm surprised you came to visit, MiMi," Sara said, setting down two cups of royal milk tea. Misa glanced away from the news as she gratefully took her cup.

"It's been forever!" She said cheerfully. "I thought I should visit before my career really skyrockets if you know what I mean." She examined Sara's demeanor, glad to see her relieved.

"Yeah, especially with everything going on with Kira."

Misa straightened. "Kira? I've heard about it, and I heard the guy who killed our parents died, but what exactly is it?" She crossed her arms. She knew very well about the name the population had given her, actually enjoying the name immensely.

Sara frowned. "Nobody knows for sure, but criminals around the world have been dropping dead." She sat down next to Misa, pulling out a flask. "I have to admit, it's an interesting social experiment."

"Huh?" Misa blinked. "A social experiment?"

Sara immediately pulled out her laptop and showed Misa her findings. "Websites like this are popping up everywhere lately."

Gelus moved from where he was sitting on the other side of Misa to look at the computer. "The Legend of Kira the Savior. That sounds really good."

"When I search the word Kira," Sara explained, "I'm pulling up tons of sites just like this one. The media hasn't picked up on it. They're still calling this a succession of unexplained deaths among the world's most hardened criminals, which honestly makes it seem like the government is responsible for this." She scrolled down, gesturing to the website. Misa noticed the excited expression on her sister's face. "Bu the people of the world can already sense that something is happening, and they actually enjoy it immensely."

"What do you mean?" Misa asked, hope blossoming in her chest. She knew her message as Kira was going to spread, but for it to be happening so soon? How hadn't she heard about this?

Sara chuckled. "Come on, MiMi, I would have thought you of all

people would know humans are two-faced." She leaned back. "I'll give you an example. If my class were to be asked to discuss whether bad people deserve to die, like the death penalty, you can bet everyone would give the politically correct answer that it's wrong to kill people. Or, at least that's what they'd say in most of the world that abolished the death penalty."

"I get it," Misa beamed. "Anyone would give the politically correct response for the sake of keeping up appearances, but online where they can remain anonymous, they can say their true feelings."

*Maybe people are afraid to say it out loud, but they all understand what's happening.* Misa thought. *Someone's making the bad guys disappear one by one. Pretty soon, there will be no criminals left, and we don't have to be afraid anymore! That perfect world is how it should be, and if the experiment, Light Yagami, doesn't do what must be done, I will.*

And she did need to find some way to investigate Light and learn what side he was on. He had the Death Note, but he was also the son of the NPA Superintendent. She knew well enough that she couldn't do anything to anger him regardless of what side he was on. She wasn't allowed to harm him, but he had no such rule against her, so if she were to kill his father, there was no doubt Light would retaliate, and it would guarantee her death.

For the time being, it was best to assume he was neutral unless provoked and be prepared for if he was against her.

The television suddenly changed channels without Sara's interference. "We'd like to apologize for the interruption. As of now, we're bringing you a live worldwide broadcast from Interpol, ICPO."

"Hm? What's this?" Gelus asked, and Sara chuckled.

"Interpol? This'll be good."

The screen flickered, and a man appeared, the nameplate "Lind L. Tailor" under him. Misa blinked. That had to be the dumbest thing she had ever seen, even if they didn't necessarily know it was stupid.

"I head up an International Police Task Force," Lind L. Tailor explained, "Which includes all member nations. I am Lind L. Tailor, otherwise known as L."

Misa blinked, pouting. She had been a true crime nerd for years, and L was someone she looked up to, being able to solve cases even the

police gave up on. She had been hoping L would one day take up the case of her family's murder. Was the world's greatest detective really this idiot?

Her eyes widened. *Wait...L wouldn't do that. He's never shown his face before, so why would he show it now in a case with supernatural implications? This has to be a decoy!*

"Criminals worldwide are being murdered by a serial killer. I consider this crime to be the most atrocious act of murder in history. I will not rest until the person or persons responsible are brought to justice. Kira, I will hunt you down. I will find you."

Could she take this announcement seriously, or was this being used to get a rise out of Kira? From what she knew about L, he liked to bait and annoy the culprit into slipping up. She chuckled,

"Ah, classic L." Sara rolled her eyes, knowing her sister's fascination with the more morbid aspects of life. Of course she'd know these things.

Gelus looked up at Misa worriedly. "Why are you not worried? He seems certain he'll catch you."

While she couldn't reply, she made it clear in her body language that there was no reason to be worried. *L won't find me. He'll have to get the Death Note first. And as long as the police don't find it, I'm safe. And as long as I leave no evidence, there's no tie they could arrest since they won't investigate me as a celebrity without concrete evidence.*

"Kira, I've got a pretty good idea of what your motivation might be," Lind L. Tailor said, "And I can guess what you hope to achieve. However, what you're doing right now is evil."

Misa pursed her lips. That line was certainly meant to get a rise out of Kira, and as offended as she was by it, she knew that even if she had the chance to, she couldn't act on this. It would only lure her into whatever L's trap was.

Did the real L think she was evil? After all, she only went after criminals already in prison and those who were directly attacking others, though the direct attacks were in varying ways than heart attacks, so she couldn't be traced to it. They both did the same thing in different ways, and once people realized the death penalty was a guarantee for crimes of harming others for no good reason, they'd stop committing them. Surely L would understand that since he too

delivered justice in his own way.

She audibly gasped when Lind L. Tailor suddenly dropped dead. She subtly looked in the direction of a confused Gelus, then to Sara, who was just as shocked.

Did Light Yagami do that?! She didn't think he would from what she had learned about him! She sent Gelus another look, and he sighed.

"I already mentioned another Shinigami came down to the human world with me. I guess Zellogi really did find his human."

There was a Second Kira?! That could ruin everything! If the Death Note was discovered, the police would have a leg up on finding her! And clearly, the Second Kira hadn't realized this was a trap! This was *bad!*

She wasn't even surprised when the L symbol appeared on the screen. She actually smiled despite her rising nerves, knowing she had been right, and L really was as smart as she had believed.

Despite the voice modifier, Misa could hear L's smugness. *"Ah. I had to test this, just in case, but I—I never thought it would actually happen. Kira…it seems you can kill people without having to be there in person. I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't just witnessed it. Listen to me, Kira. If you did, indeed, kill Lind L. Tailor, the man who you just saw die on television, I should tell you that he was an inmate whose execution was scheduled for today. That was not me. The police arrested him in absolute secrecy, so you wouldn't have heard of him on TV or through the Internet. It appears not even you have access to information about these types of criminals."*

Sara let out a barking laugh as she drank from her flask. "Looks like you were right on the money, MiMi! This guy's pretty good."

*"But I assure you,"* L said, *"L is real. I do exist. Now…try to kill me!"*

Misa's eyes lit up in amazement as she continued to watch him taunting her and the Second Kira.

*"What's wrong? Go ahead! Come on, right now! Kill me! Can't you do it?"*

This guy was completely insane! And even though this man was her direct opposition, it was absolutely incredible. Everything she had heard about him was true.

L sighed. *"Well, Kira, it seems you can't kill me after all. So there are some people you can't kill. You've given me a useful hint. Let me return the favor. I'll tell you something that I think you'll find interesting."*

"Oh?" Misa leaned forward, knowing that her sister wouldn't question her eagerness to hear what he had to say.

*"Although this was announced as a worldwide broadcast, the truth is, we are only broadcasting in the Kanto region of Japan. I had planned to broadcast this message worldwide until we found you, but it looks like that won't be necessary. I know now where you are."*

Wait...maybe this Second Kira wasn't completely bad. If L now believed Kira was specifically in Kanto, her home in the Kansai region would be completely undetected. She had a reason to come to Kanto for movie filming and visit Sara, but if she resided in Kansai, she should be completely safe.

*"While the killings started all throughout Japan,"* L explained. *"A noteworthy kill was a businessman suspected of being involved in human trafficking, which was something only mentioned in very few places, but it lines up with the timing of the earlier kills. I used that information to deduce this much. You are in Japan, and this particular victim was little more than an experiment about what you could get away with undetected, hidden amongst the deaths of criminals."*

Oh...the Second Kira had to *go*. He was giving Kira a bad name!

*"But,"* L admitted. *"I will say that the drastic change in MO of the kills depending on location implies there are two people with this power, and only one is in Kanto. So I will address both of you. To be honest, I didn't expect things would go this well. But it won't be too long now before I am able to sentence you to death. Naturally, I am very interested in knowing how you can commit these murders without being present…but I don't mind waiting a little longer. You can answer all of my questions when I catch you... Let's meet again soon, Kira."*

The broadcast cut out and left the screen snowy, a fuzzy sound filling the quiet room as Misa stared at it. So L really did know there were two Kiras. That meant she wasn't completely safe, and she had to find out who this Second Kira was fast.

She could do it easily with the Shinigami Eyes that she was still contemplating taking, but she decided she would wait and see if it was necessary. After all, Light Yagami probably wanted the Death Note to remain secret as well. Unless she had to get involved, she would focus

on promoting Kira and killing criminals; she would let him take care of the Second Kira.

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Light leaned back, turning to see what L was thinking. They were both sitting on the floor to see the results of this broadcast. "So, what'd you get out of that?"

"There are two possibilities," L mused. "There are certainly two Kiras; the MO is just too scattered to be one person." He showed Light the piece of paper he had been writing on. "On the surface, it all seems pretty simple, but once you look deeper into it," he divided the MO list in half using his pen. "One side is more minor criminals, and the other side is the worst of the worst. As much as I hope the Kira we just witnessed is childish and hates to lose like I am..." he hummed, "Given the MO around Japan, it seemed more like a fear response, to try and kill me, hoping the problem will go away. The Second Kira isn't very smart."

"Yeah..." Light crossed his arms. "Wanna bet we can have the Second Kira captured within the month?"

"Three weeks," L said. "We already have hefty leads to where the Second Kira is, so I don't see why would should pointlessly waste time. Once we know how he kills, we'll have a lead on how to capture the first." He smirked, his thumb to his lips, "Unless, of course, you would like to share any knowledge you're aware of."

"Ah," Light leaned closer to L as well, "But that would make it too easy, now wouldn't it?" This wasn't about the Kira case, and they both knew it. L knew that solving this case would uncover the secret that he was so determined to know, and it was Light's job to find Kira and cover up any clues. "We'll see how things play out. After all *we* certainly lived up to your reputation in proving Kira exists, the deaths are murders, and he's in Japan. So a little game between us sounds fun?"

"So you really do plan to cover up your secret," L's eyes lit up. "So if I win the game, I will learn your secret, and if you win, you get to keep it." He held out his hand to shake, "So how about it, Light? We'll catch both Kiras together, but the real game is if you can keep your secret."

Light looked at L's hand for a few moments, noticing Ryuk watching intently, his stance on the matter clearly to play the exciting game and go all in. And Light wholeheartedly agreed. Playing it safe was boring.

He shook L's hand eagerly. "I accept your challenge, L."

# Chapter 29

"All right. Let's start with going over the notebook's abilities," Dad said as he and Light sat in the home office. The Death Note lay open on the desk while Light read through the rules, looking for anything that could be relevant.

"I haven't tried many of these beyond 'execution is successful,' but you can change the method and time of death. So it's completely possible for Kira to change these aspects to make certain deaths seem unrelated to them."

"So all deaths must be counted, and we can't use time of death to our advantage," Dad mused, and Light shook his head.

"Not necessarily. Especially with the Second Kira, I think if we determine the time of those deaths, we might be able to get a feel for work hours since the criminal deaths could be concealed with the First Kira, who has either figured this out or has a lot of free time, so why bother?" He put down the notebook, leaning on his fist. "I want to test something, but it feels like cheating."

"Hm?" Dad only seemed confused for a few moments before he laughed to himself. "Does this have anything to do with Aizawa's ability to see Ryuk?"

"Yeah. If he's strictly able to see Ryuk and no other Shinigami, that lines up with the notion only I can control him if it comes down to it. There's really no way to prove nobody else could do it without teaching them, and quite frankly, I'd rather forget I have that power in the first place." He jotted down his notes in one of his black notebooks, similar in appearance to the Death Note but lacking the ability to kill.

"Light..." Dad sighed, "About this game you agreed to with L—"

"I know, Dad," Light said, already knowing what Dad was going to say. "I know my secret is important, but he already figured out there was something supernatural going on, just not the details. I'm not going to show him the Death Note or anything."

"I just need you to be careful, Light," Dad said with a sigh. "It's been my greatest fear since all of this began that the wrong person will find out about you, and you'll be taken away from us."

"Ah, but see, this is good."

Dad turned. "How so?" he asked incredulously, and Light straightened, smirking as he explained.

"We already established as per the rules of our game that we are trying to see who can catch Kira first, and regardless of who finds Kira first, I have to hide any evidence that ties to my secret, meaning the Death Note. Once I know who Kira is, I have means of getting it that L doesn't. That means that I get to have all the fun I want to and already have the odds stacked in my favor. Even if I let L do all the other work for me, I can get the notebook." He offered a reassuring hand on Dad's shoulder. "I mean, think about it this way. I managed to hide this notebook from you as a *toddler."*

That managed to get a chuckle out of Dad. "I suppose you're right about that. Now, we do need to discuss the fact you're *flirting* with L —"

"Dad, no, we don't," Light said quickly. "I know all the procedures, I know how to be careful, and I'll be eighteen in three months. You don't need to worry about it." He tensed. "Can we just agree to not bring this up to Mother? We both know she won't react well to this."

"Light," Dad reminded him. "I don't like to keep things from your mother. But I suppose I can stress that the situation is under control."

"Thanks, Dad!" Light hugged him, and Dad gestured at the clock.

"Don't thank me just yet, you still have cram school."

"Dad, do I have to?" Light whined, but Dad held firm.

"You told me you would at least go to this one to inform your teacher about you not returning, so your mother will stop getting emails about it. We have plenty of time to work on the case later."

"But L could be getting leads right now!"

"So?" Dad teased. "Didn't you just say you have the upper hand?"

"Don't you use my words against me," Light crossed his arms, pouting. "Fine, I'll head to cram school. I'll meet you at headquarters tonight, alright?"

"Alright," Dad got up to leave as well. They had a three-hour window

between 4pm and 7pm to focus on the case together since Dad had told L he used that time to help his family, which was technically the truth. "I'll see you then, Light. Remember to be safe."

"I will." He put the Death Note under his shirt and hurried into his bedroom to grab his jacket and put the notebook back. He heard Mother's voice behind him.

"A game with the world's greatest detective?"

Light froze, turning to face Mother, her arms crossed and her expression disapproving. He shrunk down instinctively, and Ryuk looked between the two as though trying to figure out what was going to happen.

"Uh...the situation is under control?" Light tried, and Mother gave a long-suffering sigh. But something was different this time. As a child, it had always felt like an underlying resentment of Ryuk, but this time he could actually see the genuine fear in her eyes.

"Light, you can't do stuff like this. You're lucky the incident with Aizawa didn't put any eyes on you, now challenging a detective!?"

"It'll be fine, Mother," Light said. "He doesn't know anything, and he's not going to." He moved to leave when she said something that made him turn.

"Promise me, Light. If he finds out and is a threat to you like I fear he is, you wipe his memory of it."

Light pondered this. He didn't actually feel like L was any kind of threat outside of his curiosity. What would he even do with this information? He did need to figure that out, but it seemed that he just wanted to know for knowledge's sake.

He pulled Mother into an embrace. "I promise. Don't worry about me, okay? Everything will be fine."

As he turned to leave, he heard Mother sigh. "I hope you're right."

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The three hours when Light went home with his family were always

rather disappointing. He was so content observing Light, talking to him, and investigating with him, that it was incredibly irritating whenever he had to go. So many years waiting, so many questions still left unanswered!

He decided to pass the time by observing Aizawa. Within the first few days of working with him, he had already pinpointed a peculiar eating pattern or lack thereof. Simply put, he didn't eat, and he showed no signs of hunger. Added onto other small things such as taking a little too long to breathe, he knew something was going on here that he highly doubted could be chalked up to a head injury.

He leaned towards the officer, taking in any more tiny movements he could observe. "Would it be alright if I were to do a scan on your brain waves? After all, I've been hearing a lot of odd behaviors are because of a head injury." He took a bite of his cake. "Hm. Perhaps a blood test?"

Aizawa recoiled. "No, it would not be alright. I already know what you're doing, so just stop that before you start. I don't know any more than you do, and frankly, I don't care as long as I don't feel threatened." L noticed all of the officers collectively shudder, and he frowned. Did something happen when Aizawa felt threatened?

"Don't ask," Mogi said stiffly. "Just don't."

L's brow furrowed. "That makes me want to ask even more."

However, the conversation was cut off by Soichiro coming in, and L frowned as he noticed a noticeable lack of Light.

"Yagami-San, where is Light-Kun?"

"He's at cram school for a couple hours," Soichiro said as he put his jacket down, "Letting his teacher know to stop emailing us, because we pulled him out when the Kira case started."

"I see," L said, trying to hide his disappointment. "Well, shall we continue with the report?"

Mogi nodded. "Up to this point, we've received three thousand twenty-nine responses about the murders via telephone and email. Most of them were curious citizens and prank calls, but forty-two people claimed to know Kira or have seen him. All accounts were followed up on and carefully documented. However, nobody could provide any information that wasn't already publicly available. But we didn't

wanna rule anything out. So we followed standard procedure and created files for all twenty-one of them."

"It's just a waste of our time," Ide grumbled. "Why do people even make these kinds of calls?"

"I asked Sayu about it, since she's around the age of a lot of the calls, and it seems to be some kind of new trend going on among her classmates," Soichiro groaned. "That, or it's just people looking for a thrill."

L dropped a few sugar cubes into his coffee to try and conceal his annoyance. The calls weren't going to reveal anything to the point they shouldn't even bother with them, but the notion people would try to waste their time was frustrating. "Did you look at the times of death like I requested?"

"Yeah!" Ukita pulled out the papers. "And we divided it like you asked. With the first Kira, it looks like there's at least one every hour, but the number can vary from time to time, but it remains consistent no matter what. However, with the second, all deaths occurred between 5pm and 12am on weekdays, local time. Weekends and holidays appeared to be the exception to this rule as the times of death vary much more widely than during the week."

"So the Second Kira's got a 9-5 like most people," Aizawa mused. "However, when looking further into the business-related deaths, I noticed that they all seem the benefit specifically the Yotsuba company."

"Hm. I thought so with the Second Kira. There is always more to be investigated. However, given the time frame of the killings and the business-related deaths, it can be assumed this is someone working for Yotsuba, and likely looking to get promoted. We'll discuss more on that matter when Light arrives."

"Wait, I'm confused," Matsuda said, meekly raising his hand. "How would killing people get you promoted?"

"Well, there are multiple ways," Soichiro explained. "If the company does well, more opportunities will open up, or even just new spots needing filling. For example, when I die or get promoted, someone will have to take my place as Superintendent."

"Oh, I see!" Matsuda beamed. "So basically just make sure the company does well, and you can get in more places of power. That

sounds pretty smart if it wasn't, you know, killing people." He chewed on his bottom lip. "Though I have noticed..."

"Noticed what?" Ukita asked, and Matsuda shrugged.

"Um…well, I'm not saying this to support Kira or condone the murders, but…in the last few days throughout the world, but especially here in Japan, I noticed the dramatic decrease in the number of violent crimes committed."

"Well, I suppose it makes sense." Soichiro mused. "We've suspected something like that would happen." He frowned when he noticed Matsuda seemed ashamed for having spoken up. He placed his hand on Matsuda's shoulder. "Matsuda, nobody said it would be easy to speak the truth, but it has to be done. Especially when it is something that isn't easy to say."

Matsuda looked up. "Huh?"

"Having said that," Soichiro added, "If you had gone on to say that we should commend Kira for doing such a great job of reducing violent crime, then yes, I might have had a little problem with that."

"Oh, no. No, I wouldn't." Matsuda said quickly. "That would never happen!" But Soichiro only laughed.

"Just kidding."

"I swear," Aizawa ran a hand through his hair. "I will say, it's a bit concerning Kira's doing a better job at keeping crime rates low than the police. Then again, with how screwed up the justice system is, criminals probably thought they could get away with things easier."

"But that doesn't change the justice system problem," Ide pointed out. "All this is doing is planning the death penalty as what happens for any crime, but that doesn't change the conviction issues in Japan. So that has to mean both Kiras aren't aware of how the justice system isn't reliable."

"That's a very good point," L mused. "And based on the fact the First Kira is only killing criminals, I think it's safe to assume that he is driven by a very idealistic notion of justice. We're dealing with an individual who has a very childish concept of right and wrong. Of course, this is mere speculation at this point, but still..."

But he was hardly paying attention to that. He examined the Kira task

force and their interactions with each other to see how they worked as a unit. He had seen it from behind cameras, and he had seen how they behaved individually, but he needed to determine what the weakest link in this team was. If he would mess with that link, perhaps he could get some information.

So far, the only thing he could determine was something happened when Aizawa was threatened that nobody wanted to talk about, signifying it was nothing good. Part of him wanted to test it, but he needed to have a handle on what this was before he tried that, and the last thing he needed was a threat to his life. So forcing that mattered seemed like a bad idea.

Matsuda could be a possible weak spot in general, but that didn't seem to be the case regarding Light. Who could the weak link be?

He decided to just wait until Light got back and hearing his thoughts on the matter. Maybe he would give a few hints to his secret.

OoOoO

"Finally," Light stretched as he walked out of cram school, ready to do something actually interesting. But he couldn't shake this gut feeling that had him turning around from time to time. It almost felt like he was being watched.

It had long since gotten dark, but Light barely noticed as he walked through the streets without a care in the world. If anything came for him, he could handle it, which was why he let himself ignore that weird feeling.

"Light, you got a second?" Ryuk suddenly said.

Light nodded subtly. He couldn't talk to Ryuk in public without sounding insane, but it wasn't like anyone around them could see Ryuk, so he could talk without issue.

"Now," Ryuk explained. "Normally, I wouldn't say anything about this since you can take care of yourself. It doesn't matter that I'm your roommate and, I guess, a parental figure for you. You're a smart kid and can handle things all by yourself. The only reason I'm going to tell you this is because, personally, it is starting to creep me out."

"Huh?"

Ryuk leaned forward as though sharing a secret between just the two of them. "You are being followed by another human. He's watching you right now."

Light stopped abruptly. The hair on the back of his neck rose, knowing now that he hadn't been just paranoid that someone was watching him. He was used to people staring at him as he left cram school because of his looks, but this was different. It was a good thing Ryuk told him about this, or he could have led whoever this was straight to L. He hadn't been careful enough, and that could have been a massive mistake.

He took a breath and kept walking, but instead of going straight across the street, he turned to the left. And now that he knew there was someone here, he relaxed, chuckling as he heard Ryuk complaining.

"It's really starting to get on my nerves. I realize there's no way he can see me," he contorted himself so he could look at Light's stalker while still flying forward, "But because I'm always following behind you wherever you go, I feel like I'm constantly being watched."

"That's a problem." Light mused. "I'll have to get rid of him as soon as possible." He finally turned to Ryuk with a mischievous smile. "Let's have some fun with this, shall we?"

He quickly messaged Dad, letting him know he was being followed, and since it most likely wasn't Beyond Birthday, he was going to mess with them for this. He knew he wouldn't get a response since L didn't allow phones, but it felt polite.

With that, he pulled his flute out of his bag and began playing the most haunting melody he could think of, continuing to walk towards the Sanshiro Pond, making sure to stay at a pace his stalker could follow.

He continued to play his flute standing on a rock, checking subtly from time to time to see his stalker slip up and let Light see him. It was probably quite the sight, a young man playing the flute next to a pond under the moonlight that made the water shine.

A feline grin formed on his face as his stalker finally revealed himself, and he turned himself completely invisible, only to appear behind his stalker and grab him firmly by the shoulder.

"Why were you following me?" The man jumped in alarm, and Light quickly assessed the situation. This man didn't seem to be a threat of any kind. He almost... "Hold on, are you a PI?"

"Yes," the man admitted. "I was asked to follow you, Light Yagami."

Ryuk laughed. "This is getting interesting."

"Were you told why?" Light inquired, and the man nodded.

"I was told to observe your stance on the Kira case, and your relationship with your family."

"Were you now? I assume you were only following me for tonight, correct?" The man nodded, and Light smiled smugly as he pulled out a piece of paper from his spiral notebook for cram school, quickly writing on it. He handed it to the man. "Just remove any mention of hotels from your report, and give this to the one following you. Don't read it, just deliver. And let's hope we never see each other again."

And with that, they parted ways, with Light taking a moment to bask in the moonlight before heading back to the hotel, knowing his detour for dramatic effect had cost him half an hour, but he could get there quickly with magic.

"That's it?" Ryuk asked. "You're just going to let him go?"

"Oh, of course not," Light said cheerfully. "Whoever sent that Private Investigator is in for a surprise when he reads that note." He gestured below, and Ryuk's eyes widened.

"You put a tracker on that paper."

"Yep, so not only will I know where likely the Second Kira lives, but I also requested 5.6 million yen in hush money regarding the sending someone to stalk me thing. I might be capturing Kira, but I might as well make a profit for my troubles." He turned to Ryuk. "After all, I do need to save up money for the future, not to mention, pay you in a hefty amount of apples for the help."

Ryuk cackled. "Light-o, I raised you well."

# Chapter 30

"So...what do you have there?" Aizawa asked incredulously as Light cheerfully sauntered into headquarters, holding a coffee after a very busy night. He adjusted how he was holding his work file as he looked up at Aizawa, who was gesturing to the coffee, but the both knew he was referring to Zellogi, who was standing behind Light.

"A coffee," Light replied, sitting down next to L. Aizawa continued to stare at Light in complete exasperation for a few moments before Light rolled his eyes. So Aizawa could see any Shinigami that Light could. That would make keeping any magic-related secrets from him much harder. "Also I found the Second Kira and stole his power last night."

Matsuda just about choked on his drink, taking a moment to collect himself. "Hold on, when did that happen!?"

"Remember when I mentioned a PI was following me the other day? I was waiting to do anything about it until I had collected my hush money, and then I immediately went into his house and stole his power." He blinked as he looked at the dumbfounded task force. "What?"

"Are you going to inform us of the Second Kira's identity?" L asked, and Light pondered his options. On the one hand, he didn't want to waste everyone's time when he already knew Higuchi's identity and had stolen his Death Note. On the other hand...that would give him time to test some things.

"We had already figured it out pretty quickly," Light mused, an impish grin spreading on his face. "And how am I supposed to know you're legit if I do all the work." He cocked his head teasingly. "Just have the rest of the task force looking for the first Kira, and you can go find the second. Not like he can do much since I stole his power...not that he knows it yet."

He noticed Dad give a long-suffering sigh as he realized what Light had been doing last night during his supposed night walk.

Zellogi turned to Ryuk. "The King was right about your human."

"I know, right?" Ryuk laughed, "Yeah, he's pretty special. You're not gonna tell anyone about L's identity even if you get to give your

notebook to someone else, right? That's not nearly interesting enough."

"Agreed."

Light gave a small sigh of relief. It had been a risk to bring Zellogi here. However, he didn't have much other option because while Higuchi still technically owned the notebook, Light had just stolen it, the Shinigami reasonably preferred knowing where his notebook was. He knew Dad was more than aware of the second Shinigami in the room, even if he could only see Ryuk. That was probably something they would need to talk about later, given potential arrangements, but hopefully, the experiments Light planned would be worth it.

"Well, I believe I won't have to do much," L replied. "I am already confident in who the Second Kira is, and I can simply check your finances to see who gave you money. I'll have Watari do that, and he will be captured by tonight." He offered a smile. "Does Light-Kun perhaps want to know each other better?"

Light nodded. "Yeah." L definitely wanted to see if he could get his hands on what Kira's killing power was. But he wouldn't find it.

...

He had to know what was going on! For Light to walk in casually and inform them he had captured the Second Kira, he had an advantage over L in this. Perhaps, in this case, it had involved the PI, but there was undeniable proof the reason Light had decided upon this game was that he knew he could win.

But the Second Kira was surely wealthy enough to have a competent security system, so how had Light done it?

And now he knew Aizawa had some kind of psychic bond with Light. He had known about what Light had done before anyone else. While L knew he could have been referring to the coffee Light had been holding, he didn't consider that for a second once it was added onto all the other strange happenings. It was something worth testing if he could just find a way how. Perhaps ask around the hospital when Aizawa had suffered a head injury to see if anyone was aware of something? He needed to test the bond between them. How did

Aizawa know what Light had done? Could he see something nobody else could?

He hadn't realized he had suggested they play tennis until Light was laughing. "Is that a problem for you?" L asked. "You were a tennis champion in what would be your junior high years, correct?"

"Yeah, and a fencing champion before that," Light replied as they sat down on a bench. "I haven't played in a while, though." He pulled up his pant leg, and L noticed the scars on Light's leg that remained relatively dark. That wasn't something that he should be playing on since his bone had been shattered a year ago, even if he did have surgery. It still amazed L that Light was walking just fine with that injury.

"If you are worried about your injury, we don't have to play," L said, "It was merely a suggestion."

"Oh, I'm not worried," Light replied, running his hand across his leg, and L could have sworn he saw a brief red glint in Light's eyes. "Perhaps we could do that tomorrow?" His eyes twinkled in amusement. "So, you'd have to play tennis as well if that was what you chose, and you know I'm a former champion."

He had expected Light to pick up on that. "Yes." he sat down next to Light. "It's been a while, but at one time, I was actually the British Junior Champion."

"Were you raised in the UK?" He learned back. "It's not like Beyond told me much about you."

"I lived in England for about five years, when I was younger."

Light's interest piqued. "Oh, is that so?" He stood up, "Stay there, I'll be back in about five minutes with my supplies." With that, he headed off, leaving L alone in the park. He pulled out his phone.

"Watari, have you gotten any results?"

*"Yes, it seems the one who gave Light money was Kyosuke Higuchi. I can go deeper into his bank records to find any sign of a Private Investigator if you wish."*

"Don't bother," L replied. "Make the arrest while I am out with Light."

After all, he didn't want Light doing anything that could prevent a

thorough questioning to figure out what this power was. This was the real game, and a petty criminal that got his hands on supernatural power was nothing to L. Now, he could focus on the actually interesting Kira, and more importantly, on Light.

"Watari," he said quickly. "I want you to look into Aizawa-San's hospital records and any unusual happenings after the head injury. He has a connection to Light, and I need to understand it."

*"Understood."* The line went dead just as Light appeared, changed into his tennis clothing and a duffel bag over his shoulder. L noticed that Light had a brace around his ankle. *Interesting...* he wanted to test Light's physical abilities to see if it could be perhaps enhanced beyond a normal human, so was the brace actually needed, or was it for show?

"Well, shall we play?" Light asked. "Since I still need to be careful, why don't we just play a single set, first one to six?"

"That's fine by me," L replied, and he couldn't shake the feeling he was being watched by eyes outside of Light. He met Light's gaze, and the mutual understanding set in that this game was all a test to understand one another and lay the groundwork for saying they had gotten closer.

Light blinked in mild surprise as L made the first move. "You sure don't mess around."

"He who strikes first wins." L said, and a smirk formed on Light's face.

"That's probably why I got to the Second Kira before you did!" Light teased and began to play.

...

Light noticed that during their entire game, L's eyes kept flickering to his leg. He was waiting to see if Light could hold his own despite his injury. It was undoubtedly a strain on his body to play tennis again after so long, but so what? This was exciting.

He knew L was going to capture Higuchi today. They had already suspected him, and the only thing holding L back was a desire to learn

about what power this was. Of course, that was nothing Light couldn't handle since he was sending Zellogi to tell Higuchi to renounce ownership. But Light didn't know what to do with the Shinigami now that he had found him. He wanted to keep the notebook for a few more experiments, but it was a little crowded when he was far more comfortable with just Ryuk.

But he had to figure out what he would do fast because L was preparing to step closer if this tennis match was any indication. He was going to try and get him to say something that would reveal what exactly his powers were, but what L really wanted to know was the origin. Where did Light's power come from? For that, he would need to find the Death Note. Even if he found the grimoire, it should be worthless without being a Death Note owner.

And it didn't matter all too much, even if L did figure something out...

*"You'd wipe his memories, just like you did to me?"*

Yamamoto's voice echoed in Light's head, catching him off guard as he stepped wrong and his injured leg gave out. He yelped as he crashed to the ground.

"Light!" Ryuk hurried over and helped him up. "You okay?"

Light nodded a bit as L hurried over as well. "Light-Kun, are you hurt?"

"I'm fine," Light said, but he knew it wasn't convincing as he squeezed his leg as though that would help with the spike of pain that went through his leg. "I just stepped wrong."

But he couldn't get Yamamoto's voice out of his head. He managed to not think about what he had done most of the time, but every time he talked to Yamamoto on calls, knowing that he no longer remembered their relationship or Light's secret, he wanted to give in and tell him everything. The only thing stopping him was remembering why he had done it—to protect Yamamoto, even if it meant losing him forever.

"Well, this was nice," Zellogi said, "But I think I'm just gonna kill the owner and head back to the Shinigami realm," he turned towards Ryuk before chuckling at the sight of the youngest among them caring so much for a human. "I'll be watching."

Light groaned. There went his chance to experiment on a notebook

that wasn't his unless he wanted to start experimenting with creating his own Death Note manually.

L helped Light up, letting him lean on L. He knew he didn't have to, he could probably walk on his own, but something about L holding onto him was...nice.

And he found himself hoping more than anything that if L did find out the truth during their game, he would take it well. Light already knew that even if he had told Mother he would if it was necessary, he never wanted to wipe the memory of someone he cared about ever again.

OoOoO

"Well, that was remarkably easy," the Shinigami King mused from where he observed his fascinating experiment, talking to the detective L Lawliet. Zellogi's choice in a human had been dismal at best, so easy to defeat that it hadn't taken any effort from even mere mortals like that task force.

Of course, Gelus's chosen human was still safe from those trying to catch her, but despite her promising potential, she was supposed to die by March, so she wouldn't do if he wanted to push the experiment even further.

Whenever Light Yagami pushed his powers to new limits, it involved his loved ones being in danger, or perhaps...

"Have you trained enough?" He asked, turning away from his cauldron to his own apprentice, the half-breed that had never been meant to exist. But his determination to best humanity's greatest detective and be more than a replacement to both him and now the experiment made him powerful. If anyone was going to spice up the game and perhaps bring Misa Amane closer. What she was doing as Kira could benefit the Shinigami Realm if she lessened the number of murders and left more humans for the Shinigami here to prey upon.

Beyond Birthday stepped out of the shadows, "I'm more than ready, sir."

"Excellent," a cruel grin spread on the King's face. "Go down to the human world and do what you wish, as long as you assist in the

growth of the experiment. I don't care who you must kill to do so."

"Is there anything I am forbidden from doing?" Beyond Birthday inquired, and the King shook his head.

"Aside from killing the experiment, there is nothing I will forbid you to do outside of the typical rules of a Shinigami. If anything comes up, I will warn you."

Hearing that he had next to no restrictions, Beyond Birthday laughed. "Well then, your wish is my command."

# Chapter 31

"What do you mean you're not at liberty to say?!" Deputy Director Kitamura demanded, and Soichiro only managed to heave a sigh. He should have known he would be in for this once it was announced L had captured the Second Kira. How is this going to play out? What information does he want to know?

"I'm very sorry, sir. We're under orders from L not to discuss the case with anyone, including you," he explained. Hopefully, he just wanted insight on how L had captured Higuchi, which L had allowed him to explain because it was unrelated to Kira's ability to kill.

"I'm not asking for details here, just what you're doing and where." Kitamura insisted. "Your task force managed to capture one of the Kiras in barely two weeks. How?"

"He sent a Private Investigator after my son, and after Light blackmailed him, we managed to trace his finances." He sighed. "That is all I am allowed to tell you. Everything else is classified information.

Kitamura massaged his temples, turning towards the window. "You know, Yagami, the people want results. They want to know how Kira is able to kill the way he does."

"And I'm afraid I can't tell you that because even we don't know. He died in prison before he could be interrogated. We have an autopsy being run on his brain to see if there is any clues there."

The lie felt bitter on his tongue despite how easily he said it. But even if he did tell the truth about it being a magical notebook with the ability to kill people just by writing a name, would he even be believed? Even after months, he was still struggling to process that such a thing existed.

He had promised Light he would keep this secret, and he had no intention of breaking that promise. No matter what happened, he would keep Light safe. However, it left a bad taste in his mouth to keep the secret of how Kira killed to himself when that could further the investigation, even if he knew Light had it handled.

He turned to leave, but Kitamura stopped him. "Yagami, what about this L character? Can he be trusted?"

"I wouldn't say I am the best judge of that, given his involvement in saving my son's life last year," Soichiro replied honestly. "However, if I had to look at the situation without any bias...he's a lot more capable than we are." He heard his phone buzz, and he picked it up. "This is Superintendent Yagami speaking."

*"Chief!"* Ukita said worriedly. *"Something's going on with Sakura TV. It seems Kira reacted to Higuchi's capture!"*

"What?!" He glanced at the Deputy Director before hurrying out of the office. "Do Light and Ryuzaki know?"

*"Yeah, they went to lunch so they're on their way here."*

"Alright." Kira was reacting? This was undoubtedly going to be interesting. Maybe this would give them a better understanding of who Kira was.

OoOoo

Light hurried inside alongside L, jumping onto the couch next to Ryuk to figure out what was going on. If it was Sakura TV, then this probably meant nothing. However, it was still important to check since they did just capture the Second Kira after all, and the only people who knew the truth of Higuchi's death were Light and Ryuk.

"So Kira has reacted?" L asked as he sat down in his usual chair. Mogi nodded and turned on the television.

*"In other words, all of our reporters and staff here are Kira's hostages. Aside from that, we have a professional obligation to share this message with you. I assure you that this is not a hoax and that Sakura TV is not airing this tape for the purposes of sensationalism."*

"This is already wrong," Light mused. "Didn't we already determine the First Kira wouldn't do something like this?" His eyes widened as a thought came to him. "No...don't tell me." He quickly looked towards Ryuk, who was lounging nonchalantly on the couch.

"Don't tell you what?" L asked, turning to Light inquisitively, his eyes lighting up slightly. "Could it be you believe Beyond Birthday is back?"

"Don't be so quick to worry about that, Light-o," Ryuk reminded him, "He's at the bottom of the ocean. Maybe Zellogi just decided to pick a new human."

"No, there's no way," Light said to L, but he already knew he was going to be checking tonight. He bounced his leg to calm himself, glancing over to notice the others talking amongst themselves about what this could mean.

*"Yesterday, our program director here at Sakura TV received two tapes. After a thorough examination, there could be no doubt that they were from Kira himself."*

"How could they have proved that?" Soichiro wondered, and despite the question being general, Light knew it was directed to him. He sighed.

"I suppose it could be anything. Kira is a supernatural entity, so while the most logical assumption would be the death of a criminal, any fake could take advantage of Kira's MO for that." He sighed. "Maybe this is all mind control or something akin to that?" After all, it was possible to control people's actions before they died, so it wasn't much of a stretch.

"Is that something Kira can do?" L asked, grinning despite the dire situation. Light could practically feel Aizawa's eye roll from behind him.

"At this point, who knows the limits of what Kira can do," Aizawa replied, crossing his arms as he watched the news. "Nothing's off the table."

*"Kira has instructed us to air this tape, and we do intend to comply with his demands. We understand that it contains a message to all the world's people from Kira."*

"This has to be another fake, right?" Ide mused, but Matsuda shook his head.

"I doubt it. I'm pretty sure even Sakura TV wouldn't stoop that low. And it's kinda hard to predict Kira's MO when right off the bat, we had two that we were aware of. Who knows how many more there could be?"

No more than six could be present in the human world and function at a time. However, even if that did count the Shinigami, that still meant

it could be another Kira.

The screen suddenly changed, and Light was mildly alarmed by Kira's emblem on the screen. Something about it was deeply concerning, and it took a few moments to pinpoint that this was the exact same font as the one L used.

*"I am Kira. If this video is being aired at exactly 5:59 p.m, as I requested, then the time now is 5:59. Please change the channel to Taiyo TV. The news anchor, Mr. Kazuhiko Hibima, would die of a heart attack at exactly 6 o'clock."*

"Change it!" L demanded, and Soichiro quickly changed the channel, eyes wide as he saw that sure enough, that man was dead. Light's eyes flickered to Ryuk, who was becoming interested. But he noticed a hint of worry in Ryuk's eyes despite being amused, as though he too was becoming concerned.

"It can't be!" Matsuda's hand subconsciously flew to his throat at the implication this was providing. "Is Kira killing people who go against him?"

"I..." Aizawa was about to say he didn't think so, but he stopped as he realized what he had just witnessed. "I don't know."

"Kira said that he was going to send a message to the people of the world." L mused before he suddenly became far more serious than he had been a moment ago. "Stop this broadcast. We can't let him finish!"

"Get Sakura TV on the line!" Soichiro ordered, "Anyone else call the station to make sure nobody else gets involved until we can be sure of what is going on."

"It's no good." Aizawa said worriedly. "I'm trying, but none of my contact at the station has their phones on." Ide nodded.

"Same here. I know that L specifically requested all of us but that just means others might try to get involved."

"Nobody's picking up a reception, either." Mogi said. "Do you think..."

Ukita was the first one to run off. "Damnit! I'll stop this broadcast myself if that's what it takes!"

"Ukita!" Aizawa protested, but Ukita was already gone. Aizawa looked to the others, and Soichiro shook his head before chasing after him.

"The rest of you stay here. Hopefully, I'll catch up with him. If I don't, I'll head to the station and make sure things are handled there."

"Yes, sir," everyone else said hesitantly, and Light looked back towards the tape.

*"People of the world, please listen to me. I intend to create a new world. A perfect world that is free from evil. If you agree to join me in my mission, I know we can make it happen. And as long as no one tries to catch me, I promise that the innocent will not die."*

"This feels fake," Light mused. "Almost like someone is saying it but doesn't actually mean it."

"I'm glad to know I wasn't the only one getting that feeling." L said worriedly. "I am getting the sense this is perhaps a ploy to get someone's attention, but if it's mine or the real Kira's, I can't say yet."

"Light, is it even safe for Ukita to go down there?" Matsuda asked worriedly, and Light stood up, considering the possibilities.

"Usually, Kira needs a name and a face to kill. So the fake police IDs should keep him safe if this truly is the original Kira. However...I can't say in good conscience that it is safe." He looked up to face the others. "There are ways for someone to kill with only a face. If Dad hasn't caught up to him...I don't want to think about what could happen." He picked up the remote, checking his watch. "By now...he would have already gotten there." he changed the channel, not caring to listen to the rest of Kira's message, and what he saw made his blood run cold.

Ukita lay dead in front of the door to the Sakura TV station. And next to him...

A Wara Ningyo doll.

"It can't be..." Light whispered. No. No, it couldn't be possible. Beyond Birthday couldn't be back!

Everyone else knew what this meant as well. Ryuk straightened out of his usual hunch, realizing the implications of this just as Light did that Beyond Birthday somehow escaped the sea.

He heard the sound of a phone clattering to the ground, and Light turned, quickly realizing a problem as he saw Aizawa had begun shaking at the sight of the death of the young man he had been mentoring. Light could sense it, and he knew that Aizawa might have

another freak out if this kept up.

"Ukita?"

Ide quickly realized the issue and held onto Aizawa's hand. "Are you alright?"

Aizawa only gritted his teeth. "Damn it! That bastard did this!" He quickly turned to leave, but Light hastily grabbed his arm. Aizawa turned. "What?!"

"You're panicking." That was all Light said, and Aizawa instantly understood. They had agreed to take precautions in case there was ever danger of something like that happening, and if there was ever a time to take that precaution, this kind of situation would be it.

Aizawa hesitantly looked towards the door and then back at L, who was watching the screen and not paying attention to them at this moment. He gave the nod that made Light sure this was the safest option.

"Sleep," Light ordered under his breath, and Aizawa's knees buckled under him as he doubled over, falling completely limp in Ide's arms.

"Aizawa!" Matsuda hurried over, and that got L's attention as he saw the sight of his seemingly fainted coworker. "Mogi! Get some water or something!" He said as he started fanning Aizawa with a magazine, knowing it would do nothing to wake him, but they didn't want L to know that.

That would work as a diversion. Light ran out the door before anyone could stop him, pulling his cloak and flute out of his bag, making sure he was outside before he took off towards the station. This had all been a ploy to get his and L's attention, and Light had no intention of letting that bastard get away again.

He landed in front of the Sakura TV station, making sure he was still invisible so he couldn't be recorded by the news stations. With a wave of his hand, he shattered the glass as he stepped inside.

"Where are you, Beyond Birthday!?" He demanded. "You wanted my attention, right? Well you have it!" He noticed the security camera in the corner of the room, quickly disabling it as he heard a voice behind him.

"I didn't think it'd just take killing one police officer to bring you out

of hiding, Moonie."

Light spun around and gritted his teeth when he saw Beyond Birthday, who looked far better kempt than when he had last seen him. He also noticed a similar aura to him that Light knew he possessed when invisible. That must have been how he dropped the doll there.

"How did you learn that kind of magic?" Light demanded. Beyond Birthday laughed a Shinigami's laugh, playing a finger to his lips.

"Now, now, I can't reveal all my secrets on our first real fight, don't you think?" He glanced towards the cameras still watching the news station before grinning impishly at Light. "Shall we take this somewhere more private?"

"With pleasure." Light said, consciously trying to stop himself from playing dirty and attacking now.

Beyond Birthday bounced a bit as he took off into the air, "Catch me if you can." He laughed as Light chased after him, just in time to escape a police van crashing into the building, and he knew it was Dad. It was good that he was getting his enemy away from here so Dad would be safe.

He didn't know exactly where they had ended up, nor did he particularly care as he instantly dove for an attack, getting in the first hit and sending Beyond Birthday back a few steps. *He's gotten stronger. Did he just figure it out from me, or did he train?*

When Beyond Birthday pulled out a Death Note, Light instantly realized there was a problem. He had gotten his hands on a Death Note?! How long had he been out of the sea to have done that?

He didn't have time to ponder that for long as Beyond made a vague gesture with his notebook, and it suddenly formed into a scythe. "Can you do this, Moonie?!"

The Death Note could do that?! He hadn't read about that in the grimoire, and he hadn't thought to test it. Even then, he didn't have his notebook on him right now.

Realizing he might be in danger, Light pulled out his flute, using it to manipulate the winds and provide enough of a distraction that allowed him to grab a tree branch and use it to block a blow from the scythe.

He thought back to his kidnapping and got an idea, kicking at Beyond Birthday's gut and then running just past him. As predicted, he was able to grab a long butcher knife from Beyond Birthday's robes. This was something he could use against a scythe, and he quickly enhanced it before going in for an attack.

Now that he had a weapon, he should be able to counter a scythe relatively easily. It wasn't exactly the deadliest of weapons if Light was smart about it, jumping over the blade's reach on the ground and going for an attack from behind. He managed to cut into Beyond's shoulder before he turned intangible and hid in the fog.

*Damn! Where did he go?* Light looked around in the fog, listening for any indication and knowing he might need to dodge quickly.

"Light-o!" Ryuk shouted in warning, and Light spun around just in time to see a blur slam into Beyond Birthday.

Aizawa had Beyond Birthday pinned to the ground, his foot against the half-Shinigami's neck. Light's eyes widened as he realized Aizawa's clothes were torn, not to mention he was up and about. What had happened?! How had he gotten past a direct order to be asleep?

Beyond Birthday could only laugh as he looked up at Aizawa, who pressed harder, prompting Beyond Birthday to turn intangible again and roll away, remaining that way so he couldn't be pinned again despite Aizawa's efforts.

"Well, this isn't fair at all," he complained, still grinning as he looked Aizawa over. "I had heard about your little creation, Moonie, but I didn't think it was legit. I'll have to try it out myself." He took off into the air. "Next time, let me know we get to bring puppets. I'll see you soon."

Light was about to chase after him but realized Aizawa's presence was probably more important. He hurried over to him, realizing that he wasn't in the same state like he was being controlled or had freaked out. "Aizawa?"

Aizawa turned. "Are you alright? I could tell you were in danger."

"I don't understand," Light said mostly to himself. "I thought the order would have kept you asleep."

"Nope," Aizawa crossed his arms, groaning. "It seems I can't sleep even when you order me to. It might have looked like I was asleep, but I

just couldn't control my body until you were in danger and I could fight against it."

"Oh..." Light grimaced. "So that's not an ideal solution."

"No, it's not." He clenched his fists. "You might need to explain to Ryuzaki why I jumped out the window on a tall building... I wasn't exactly in my right mind and chose that over running through the lobby and getting caught on cameras."

Light pursed his lips. "That's...certainly going to be interesting." He looked back to where Beyond Birthday had left. "That bastard got away."

"So do you think he's Kira?" Aizawa asked, and Light shook his head.

"No, he was just using that as a reason to get mine and L's attention and make a point about his power being the same as mine and as Kira's."

"So are you going to ever elaborate on what that power is?" Aizawa asked, and Light looked at him tiredly. He considered whether he should say it for a moment, but he realized that Aizawa had been around as long as Dad had and had been more personally impacted by it.

"A magical notebook that kills whoever you write the name of."

Aizawa opened his mouth to say something, then stopped, trying to determine for a few moments if Light was serious. Once he realized he was, he pursed his lips. "Huh. I was expecting worse."

"Worse?" Light raised his eyebrow. "It's a murder notebook."

"Yeah, but I've been debatably undead for months, so compared to that?" He gave a long-suffering sigh. "You do realize I'm going to tell Ide about this, right?"

"I expected nothing less." Light replied, turning to face Aizawa. "Any other thoughts on the implications of me owning a murder notebook since I was a baby?"

"It certainly explains why you asked a lot of death-related questions," Aizawa replied, sticking his hands in his pockets as they started walking back to the hotel. "But to be honest, I've suspected something along those lines ever since I got the confirmation Ryuk was a

Shinigami. I might have had a different reaction before the debatably undead thing, but at this point nothing surprises me. Now, if you were Kira, I would have a problem with that."

"Don't worry, I'm not," Light assured him. "I mainly only use it to guarantee executions and save people in hostage situations, or on the worst of the worst who would be killed in prison anyway."

"Understandable."

As they headed back, they ensured Dad had gotten the tapes safely, and thankfully he had. Ukita's body had been moved as well, but Light noticed Aizawa lingering in the spot where the body had been.

"Aizawa, are you alright?"

"I should have stopped him," Aizawa whispered, falling to his knees, and Light bent down beside him. "I mean...I have superhuman speed now that I was able to reach you in seconds. I could have caught up with him and stopped this."

"And what would have happened if you did?" Light asked hesitantly. "Beyond Birthday was in the area, and we know what happens if you're in danger."

"But it shouldn't be like that!" He snapped, tearing at his hair. "We shouldn't have to be worried all the time about if I'm going to have another freakout and attack someone. I just want... If I have this power, shouldn't I be able to use it for something besides allnighters? Shouldn't I be able to actually fight back without losing myself completely?!" He looked up at Light, and despite having lost the ability to shed tears, Light knew he would be crying if he was able. "I was able to save you because of an instinct and what made me like this. But why can't I save someone else?"

"Well..." Light helped him up, deciding here wasn't the best place for that. "I can think of a few ways to fix that, but you might not like it."

"At this point, I'll try anything."

"We need to stop just ignoring your situation," Light replied. "We need to fully tap into it beyond what we did at the lake and find a way to maintain your awareness even in a dangerous situation. From what I can tell, you go into a complete fight or flight, that part of you takes over completely, and the only person who can snap you out of it is Ide since he always means safety for you."

"But how are we supposed to do that?" Aizawa asked. "I'm all for it, I want to kick Beyond Birthday's ass too, but we can't exactly test that kind of thing."

"And this is the part you are not going to like," Light replied. "We might need L's help."

"L's help!?" Aizawa protested. "Why would that possibly be a good idea?!"

"He's got money, resources, existing knowledge of Beyond Birthday and is obsessed with learning the secrets of my powers. Even if he can't find out about the notebook, he's going to find out about you anyway if you seriously jumped out a multiple-story window. Learning more about what's going on with you will keep him satisfied, and if anything goes wrong, I just wipe his memory."

Ryuk laughed. "Are you sure you don't just want L's help without having to completely give up the game?"

Noticing Aizawa's remaining discomfort, Light sighed. "If you're uncomfortable with that, I can alter his memory that he thinks you had a seizure or something and a heavy object was launched into the window."

"No." Aizawa shook his head, almost as though trying to convince himself. "I can't let Ukita's death be in vain. If there's even a chance I can get this under control, I want to do it. But..."

"But?"

"If you ever find out a way to reverse this without it being potentially fatal, I want you to do that."

Light shook Aizawa's hand. "You have my word. If I find a way, you'll be the first to know."

"I appreciate it," Aizawa replied, and they both stopped on the floor they were supposed to be on, seeing there were cleaners in that room. Light checked his messages and found something from Matsuda saying they had been moved to the floor upstairs given the broken window they had said was 'a mishap.' And L was expected to have a word with Light about what happened.

Light sucked in a breath as they made it upstairs, and the first thing he noticed was that L didn't seem nearly as annoyed as he would have

expected. He looked between Light and Aizawa as though he was a child in a candy store.

"Light-Kun," he said, trying to sound professional but failing to keep the excitement out of his tone. "I am going to be watching these tapes hopefully with you to see if they can tell us anything. But before that, would you care to explain what happened with Aizawa-San?"

"It's really nothing, Ryuzaki," Ide said hurriedly, but Aizawa stopped him.

"Hideki, I gave Light the okay to explain the truth about that."

"Are you sure?" Dad asked worriedly. Matsuda and Mogi both visibly tensed as they worried about what could happen if L discovered the truth.

Light sighed. "Yes." He stepped over to L. "Well, L, I'm not going to explain everything, but I suppose you do deserve some kind of explanation, because I'm going to need your help."

OoOoO

Misa pursed her lips as she continued to process the news footage she had seen. Hadn't the idiot Second Kira been captured already?

"This is bad, Gelus," she said worriedly, and Gelus looked up from where he had been petting Kuro, as the cat had grown fond of him. Apparently, his lack of reaction initially hadn't meant he couldn't see Gelus.

"I didn't think so." Gelus mused. "Isn't this guy on your side?"

"I guess," she shook her head as she finished brushing her hair. "And he's got the Shinigami eyes, meaning his power to kill is extra dangerous. But how he was killing police officers and trying to abolish free speech made it sound like he was just making a joke of Kira! Kira's reputation is being tarnished, and if I want to make a change, I can't have that." She turned to her Shinigami. "Light Yagami seems to have the Death Note under control, so I don't have to worry about it being discovered. Still...that Wara Ningyo at the crime scene worries me. I cannot afford to leave him alone for much longer."

"Who? Light or the new Kira?"

"Either of them. I don't know what side Light is on, and I need to find out so I can figure out if he's my ally or my enemy." She stood up, tying her hair back. "If he's my ally, that would be ideal. It'll allow me to keep track of L and this fake Kira."

"But how are you going to find out?" Gelus asked. "You're safe here in the Kansai Region, so you can't mean you're planning to go there, right?"

"Sometimes you have to take risks if it means doing what's right," Misa pointed out, walking over to him and picking up Kuro, who nuzzled up against her. "Besides, I have Sara as a reason to go down there. I can get a feel for who Light Yagami is and be back within only a few weeks."

"Are you sure this is a good idea?" Gelus asked again, and Misa looked to him, determination in her eyes as she nodded.

"Yes. I'm positive."

# Chapter 32

"So, what exactly am I looking at?" Aizawa asked as he watched the heart monitor bobbing up and down, trying to get a read on him.

L looked at the heart monitor as well while Watari took notes on their findings. "It appears that the heart monitor can't determine your heart rate."

L had taken the news of Aizawa's condition with the same amount of fascination that Light had anticipated. However, what Light hadn't prepared for was that L already knew something was different about Aizawa and had requested a facility to be built in advance for the investigation. The building wasn't finished, but the basement and a few of the upper floors were. The basement would be used for testing purposes, and Light was amazed by the advanced technology within.

They had come to an agreement that the beginning of testing would be for the sake of determining what they would be dealing with before doing anything unethical, even if it was with Aizawa's permission.

"So the machine has no idea what's going on either," Light said, beginning to pace. "If we can't pinpoint all of it with machinery, we'll need to find some other way to determine what happens when your fight or flight kicks in."

"I don't think there's an ethical way to test that," Aizawa said, adjusting the jacket of the tracksuit he had been instructed to wear. He removed the heart monitor and stood up, stretching as he did so. "Do either of you know what we're dealing with, or are we just going to sit around all day?"

Watari looked him over. "For the time being, Mr. Aizawa, there are two possible theories, and as you said yourself, there is no ethical way to determine which one." He looked over his notes. "The first theory is this is simply a panic response due to unresolved trauma. Do you perhaps have a history of abuse?"

"I would rather not address that. You already know what got me in this situation," Aizawa ran his hand down his face before staring directly at Ryuk, who only offered a wave and a laugh. "What's your second theory?"

Watari's expression became suddenly serious. "The second option is

that even if you don't consciously know what it is, there is something that can kill you. Is there anything in particular that has set off this reaction?"

"It's only happened a few times," Aizawa thought back, looking towards Light in hopes of him having an answer. "The first time probably doesn't count since I had been in danger when I passed out and responded as such when I woke up. The other two times..." he tapped his foot. "Someone tried to shoot me the first time, and a stabbing the second. Though I personally don't remember it."

"Well, I don't see why that would cause it," Ryuk said to Light. "Shinigami can't be killed by stabbing or shooting."

L, unaware of the Shinigami's comment, looked Aizawa over, leaning close to him. "What do you use as sustenance?"

"Nothing." He backed up as he realized what L was asking. "No, I don't drink blood. Though if you don't get out of my personal space, I might just try it."

L only leaned closer.

Aizawa threw his hands up in exasperation, walking away from L. "I can't believe you." He looked towards Light, "Whatever. I'm done wasting time." He stepped into the testing room behind bulletproof glass, examining the area. "Can we actually run some tests? The whole reason you're here is to make sure I can function without freaking out."

L looked towards Light, "All of this would be much easier to determine if I knew the source of your powers, Light-Kun. The ability to raise the dead is an incredible feat."

"Trust me, the source of my power is more complicated than that," Light said as he pulled out his flute but stopped when he heard the elevator door open, and Matsuda came in.

"Hey, guys! I wanted to check how you all were doing." Matsuda gestured upstairs as he stepped into the laboratory. "Ide's worried sick, by the way, Aizawa. He may have sent me down here to make sure you were alright, since him being down here might mess up the results."

"I'm fine," Aizawa grumbled. "Quite frankly, I'm not in enough danger. Can we start already?"

"Can I help?" Matsuda asked. Light considered it for a few moments. They were actively trying to set off the fight or flight to determine what triggered it. But he thought back to what happened in the hospital and shook his head.

"We're going to use automatic machinery, so nobody gets hurt from the testing." He rubbed the back of his neck. "Sorry, Matsu."

"It's alright," Matsuda said, glancing at L for a moment before sitting down. "Can I at least watch?"

"I suppose that's alright," L said, turning to Watari. "Watari, do you have everything set up?"

"I do," Watari said. "We can begin immediately." He pressed a button, and Light jumped slightly when he heard a gunshot and looked up instantly, seeing Aizawa's hand move faster than should be possible and push the bullet away from his face. The bullet embedded itself into the padded wall.

"There was a spike," Watari reported as he looked over the scans still in process. "It seems even if a heart rate is undetermined, there was a noticeable change." He wrote down the results. "Increased reaction time and he calms relatively easily."

L turned on the intercom. "Aizawa-San, are you alright?"

"Yeah, I'm fine," Aizawa said, fidgeting with his ring, which Light had noticed was a calming technique. "But I will say, that's effective."

"Are we okay to continue?" L asked, his voice giving away how much he wanted this to continue. Light had his flute ready just in case, and he found his gaze lingering on L. Never had he imagined that L would be someone not much older than him and showed no fear of the abilities Light had. It was certainly refreshing, and L was providing more help than anything Light could have done on his own.

"Yeah, just get it over with," Aizawa said, clearly growing irritated as he walked towards the glass. "I already told you that I don't care what you have to do as long as we get this under control. And to do that, we need to figure out what—"

Two gunshots rang out this time, and Aizawa stepped out of the way easily. L chewed on his lip to contain his excitement as he pressed another button, sending more bullets.

This went on for a few minutes, and Matsuda was next to Light, watching in amazement. Light focused his power towards Aizawa to see if he could sense what was happening. He had been able to tell in the past when he was at his limit, but he realized that Aizawa was quickly becoming calm despite the number of bullets increasing to the point that dodging was impossible, and he was swatting them away.

"This is getting nowhere," Light said. "He's calm."

L nodded. "Yes, I can see as such from his scans." He deactivated the test. "Are you alright?"

"Yeah," Aizawa looked over the tracksuit and then down at his hands. "How are my hands not destroyed from that?"

"It does seem that bullets, no matter the material, are of no harm to him," Watari said. "Though I have one more test I want to run for today. We will determine the next course of action depending on the results." He pressed a button, and the far wall shifted to reveal a screen hidden behind more bulletproof glass. A photo of Eriko came up, and then Watari started the bullets again.

The response was instantaneous. Light felt the shift as Aizawa's stature suddenly changed, ignoring the bullets completely and lunging at the screen, trying to get through the glass. To Light's horror, it took only a moment before he succeeded, shattering the screen.

Watari turned off the test, yet Light quickly realized that Aizawa had rounded on them, and there was no recognition in his eyes. Matsuda jumped up.

"I'll get Ide!" He hurried out, and Light ran into the testing room, flute at the ready, the sound making Aizawa stop in his tracks.

"Hey, Aizawa, do you remember me?" Light asked, slowly stepping closer, beginning to play his childhood lullaby. Aizawa looked at him, and despite the emptiness in his eyes, it seemed he was starting to recognize him. "Good. Good. You're okay." He made sure to exaggerate his movements as he came closer. Aizawa flinched but made no move to stop him as he slowly placed his hand on Aizawa's forehead. "Sleep."

Aizawa collapsed into Light's waiting arms, and Light stayed there for a long few moments, holding him. He continued to wait for a long few moments until Watari came into the room, placing Aizawa onto a stretcher.

"I will run some more tests while he is sedated, but that is all I will need you or L for." Watari said, and Light shook his head.

"I'm not leaving you alone with him." He said firmly, walking alongside Watari as he moved Aizawa to a bed on the far end of the laboratory. "Someone needs to be in the room with you at all times, even if I am working on the investigation."

Watari nodded, but Light couldn't help but feel as though L's butler was bitter about the restriction. The hair on the back of his neck stood up, and he had to consciously put on a relaxed expression as he turned to L. "So what are your thoughts on what just happened? I know I got a few ideas."

L pressed his thumb to his lips as he observed Aizawa and then faced Light. "My initial belief is you have the exact same powerset as Kira, and it translated to Aizawa-San."

Light's eyebrows raised as he sat down next to L, and he managed to genuinely grin. "Really? And what brought you to that conclusion?"

"Aizawa-San was completely fine against his enemy when it was only automated machines. The moment there was a face involved, he had something to attack that, if destroyed, would end everything, and as you can see," he gestured to the broken glass in the testing room. "He wasted no time in reaching and destroying that thing." He stood up. "However, Aizawa-San is not a violent person by nature...It was mentioned this happened before. By any chance, did Aizawa-San have history with his attackers?"

"I mean..." Light thought about it. "I know he was on those investigations for a while. Maybe he had reason to believe his attacker would harm him or..." he stopped. When Ukita had died, he had sensed that panic. "I think this is a psychological response when he had a personal reason to believe that himself or his loved ones are in danger."

"I'm glad to know we can both agree on that," L said as he looked back at Aizawa and how Watari was looking over his hands for any sign of injury. "He has access to his abilities whether he is panicked or not, but is not a particularly violent person by nature, so with a clear head, he will be defensive. However, with access to a face that he has reason to believe will harm him, he protects himself by losing the ability to recognize people. The attacker isn't a person anymore. It's only a threat to be destroyed."

"I'm curious what he would be like with the Death Note," Ryuk said, laughing. "If it took losing recognition of people to be able to attack them."

Light nodded. "And the fact nothing hurt him yet he still panicked helps to solidify the idea this is largely psychological."

Ide came running in suddenly, rushing to Aizawa's side. "Matsuda told me what happened. Is he alright?" He looked Aizawa over frantically for any sign of harm, and Light stepped over to him, placing his hand on Aizawa's head.

"Wake up."

Aizawa opened his eyes, looking up at Ide in relief. "I'm alright. Apparently, this is a psychological response." He groaned, leaning against Ide for support. "Great. So now that we have a pretty good idea of what causes the problem. How do we fix it?"

"I have no idea," Light admitted but perked up as he turned to Matsuda, remembering his best friend had always been more emotionally intuned. He could ask Dad, but he knew Matsuda wanted to be more involved with the investigation. "Matsuda, what do you think?"

Matsuda pointed at himself. "You're asking me?"

"Yeah. Of all of us, you probably have a better idea of what to do about this."

"Oh," Matsuda thought about it, rubbing the back of his neck. "Do you want my honest opinion? Or should I think of something Aizawa might actually be okay with."

"Just tell me," Aizawa said, "At this point I'll do just about anything."

"I think you need therapy to cope with the unresolved trauma involving your abusive ex-wife."

"Anything but that."

"Shuichi," Ide said, "It might actually be a good idea. I've been saying you should talk to someone for a while, and I think it might help you."

"Nope." Aizawa stood up, beginning to pace. "I'm not going to delve into everything that happened back then. There's nothing there that is

relevant to me right now."

"Was it perhaps hammered into your head that you could never fight back and protect yourself?" L asked, and Aizawa stopped pacing to send him a look that had Matsuda backing up even though he wasn't the glare's recipient. But Aizawa didn't deny the statement, which only proved L's point. "I suspected as much."

"Of course I couldn't fight back," Aizawa said, crossing his arms. "I'm lucky her almost killing me let me win a divorce case. It still wasn't classified as abuse. If I fought back *at all,* she could have turned the whole thing on me and said it was self-defense."

"Yeah, that makes sense," Matsuda said, standing up and hoping he could be as much help as possible. "In that situation, you did what you had to so you could protect your daughter. But if you still have that mindset and it's making you react like this, you might need to confront that if it means protecting yourself and others."

"I suppose you're right," Aizawa said reluctantly. "But can't I just talk to Ide about my problems? I don't see a reason to talk to a therapist."

"You're as close to married as Japan will allow," Light pointed out. "I don't think that will help the situation when it comes to unresolved trauma."

"Not to mention," Ide said. "You had bad depression after Yumi was born, so maybe a therapist would help that not happen when the baby arrives?"

"Wait, what?!" Light asked. "Baby?"

"I thought I told you." Aizawa said. "Apparently, Eriko was pregnant. The timing lines up that the baby's probably mine, so I got custody as soon as the kid's born."

"I see," L said. "Well, congratulations to the both of you. When can we expect you to require family leave?"

"Never," Aizawa answered. "I don't sleep. Remember?"

"Which gives us plenty of time for you to attend therapy while everyone else would be sleeping." L pointed out. "We'll attempt this test in a month, and in that time, see if confronting your unresolved trauma helps with your panic response."

"I'll think about it," was all Aizawa said, and Light knew that was probably as close to an answer as they would get. But it wasn't a no, so he was at least thinking about it. "I'm just going to head home for the night. I need to pick Yumi up." He turned to leave. "Ide, do you want to come with, or work on the investigation some more?"

"Give me five minutes to collect those books I was reading," Ide said. "I've been researching into Shinigami legends to see if Kira is trying to emulate a god. It's fascinating to look at old stories! Maybe I'll read and Yumi some of the stories."

Aizawa smiled, loving when Ide got excited about his interests. "I'm sure she would love that." The elevator closed behind them, and Matsuda blinked.

"Huh."

"What do you mean, 'huh'?" Light asked. Matsuda shrugged.

"I think I was expecting worse, or at least for Aizawa to yell at me."

"Yeah, that's how you know the situation is serious that he is really considering it." Light replied. "Oh, L, thank you for the help with all of this."

"It's no trouble at all, Light-Kun," L said. "Even though I am positive Aizawa-San's problem is a psychological response, my initial theory about this being tied to your powerset, and that being the same as Kira, stands. Learning more about Aizawa-San may be my ticket into your powers."

Light shrugged his shoulders, "At least you're open about it. But even if you understand my powers, you'll never find out the origin of them."

"Is that a challenge?"

"What do you think?" Light checked his phone, surprised when he found a message from Mother, saying there was a surprise for him waiting at home. "I gotta go. I'll see you tomorrow, alright?"

"Have a good night, Light-Kun," L said pleasantly, waving his goodbye. Matsuda waved as well.

"I'll probably stay here a little bit longer to look over more files. Tell your family I say hi!"

Light nodded and hurried home, flying next to Ryuk. "What do you think the surprise is?"

"No clue," Ryuk said, and he examined Light's back for a moment. "Isn't telekinetically holding yourself up tiring?"

"Yeah, but it's not like I have wings or anything, so what other choice do I have?" He rolled his eyes. "I'm almost eighteen, Ryuk, I can't rely on my mother-figure to carry me everywhere anymore."

"But if you could have wings, would you want them?"

"Is that even a question? Of course, I would want wings. Who wouldn't?" He raised an eyebrow. "Out of curiosity, why do you ask?"

Ryuk chuckled, "No reason."

Light knew there was undoubtedly a reason Ryuk would ask such a question, but he decided not to push it as he landed onto his balcony, opening the door to step inside.

He froze at what he found.

Yamamoto was sitting on his bed, smiling warmly. He was up, and he was okay. Light had talked to him on video calls and known Yamamoto had healed well, despite needing some physical therapy to heal from the wounds Beyond gave him, but to see him in person alive and well brought him immense relief.

But before Light could be delighted to see him, he saw what Yamamoto had been flipping through.

"Yamamoto, what are you doing here?" Light asked cheerfully, hoping Yamamoto, who no longer remembered his powers, didn't question why he had suddenly appeared on his balcony. He could easily explain away the grimoire Yamamoto was reading, right?

"I've got some unfinished business in Kanto, so I figured I would stay for a while," Yamamoto replied, still smiling. "Your mother let me in, and I decided to look around so I could figure out how exactly you wiped my memory."

Light's eyes widened in panic as Yamamoto's expression suddenly turned cold. He narrowed his eyes.

"I remember everything, Light."

# Chapter 33

*Yamamoto grunted as he swung his sword against a tree, managing to stop his blade only a hair's length from cutting into the trunk. Excellent reflexes, but still not good enough.*

*Ever since moving, he came out to jodogahama beach as often as he could to train himself to recover from his injuries from that bastard, Beyond Birthday, or even just to blow off some steam. It was a remote part of the beach on one of the islands not far from the coast, which he could take a small boat to reach whenever he wanted. He knew he had a tendency to vent out loud, and he didn't want anyone to risk hearing him.*

*"Damnit, Light," he huffed as he practiced swinging his sword, wincing as his form was slightly off from how he needed to position himself to make up for the scar down his back. "Did you really have to wipe my memory? You could have just told me it wasn't safe and I should go somewhere until Beyond Birthday was dealt with, but noooo, you had to try wiping my memory! And now Beyond Birthday is back!"*

*He knew that Wara Ningyo doll the moment he saw it. Even the thought of that doll made him need to stop, tracing his hand down the scar on his back. Everything about that night still existed vividly inside his mind, and now Beyond Birthday was back.*

*Yamamoto wiped the sweat from his brow, pulling the picture out of his pocket that he typically used as a bookmark. He stared down at the images on him and Light in a photobooth laughing and even kissing. The one piece of evidence left that he and Light had been more than friends...and the thing that gave him his memories back that Light had erased.*

*It had happened the moment he touched this photo. All of the memories he hadn't realized were lost suddenly came back to him, and he found himself in a new region of Japan, realizing with dread what Light had done.*

*He put his sword back into its sheath as he looked out at the horizon he had a stunning view of from the cliff's edge that he used for training. Light had messaged him about Beyond Birthday being back, but even so, Yamamoto had found himself waiting for Light to come back in person and explain everything, and while he was at it, maybe explain what the hell was going on with this new Kira person. But so far, he hadn't.*

*"Maybe...waiting isn't good enough."*

*"My thoughts exactly."*

*Yamamoto spun around sword at the ready, only to freeze when he saw Beyond Birthday was standing right behind him. The hair on the back of his neck stood on end.*

*"If you have a dream, don't wait. Act." Beyond Birthday continued, his arms still crossed, and Yamamoto looked him up and down to determine whether or not he was armed. "One of life's little rules."*

*He quickly realized that he shouldn't remember what Beyond Birthday looked like. Light had altered his memory to have never actually seen Beyond Birthday since the memory associated with that tied into their relationship and Light's powers.*

*Yamamoto quickly put on an expression of confusion, masking his fear that he shouldn't have unless he remembered. "Who are you?"*

*Beyond Birthday seemed offended, placing a hand on his chest. "Aw, Daiki, you don't remember me? I could have sworn you would have your memory back by now." Then his expression changed as though realizing Yamamoto supposedly not having his memories could benefit him. "Well, I happen to be an acquaintance of Light's." He held out his hand for Yamamoto to take. "Why don't we go see him? We have something in common, you and I. We both were wronged by someone we care about."*

*Yamamoto backed up as far as he could before being against the cliff's edge, and Beyond Birthday suddenly lunged to grab him. Yamamoto reacted on instinct, remembering he had beaten this guy before.*

*"No!" He punched Beyond Birthday in the jaw and started to run in the opposite direction, only for Beyond Birthday to appear in front of him within only a few steps. Something had changed. He had just been a normal, if not slightly faster, guy before! This was something else entirely.*

*"See?" Beyond Birthday grabbed Yamamoto's wrists, grinning like a predator that had captured its prey. "We're practically friends already!"*

*Yamamoto struggled. What could he do to get out of this?! He wasn't as strong as he had been before, and clearly, Beyond Birthday had gotten stronger! "Friends?! You're not acting very friendly!"*

*Beyond Birthday softened, letting go of Yamamoto and acting almost remorseful. "I think you're getting the wrong idea here. Don't be afraid. I'm a pretty good guy when you get to know me. But sometimes..." he looked down at his hands. "I don't know my own strength."*

*He had to get out of here. Yamamoto assessed the area, not sure yet how he could escape the situation he was in. He thought back on what he had learned from Soichiro when he asked about being a police officer, and Soichiro had mentioned some patterns that criminals can fall into.*

*"What do you want with me?" He asked. "I know you want to tell me. You said we've met before?"*

*Beyond Birthday stopped, blinking for a few moments, looking long and hard at Yamamoto, before letting out a barking laugh. "I know you're lying. You don't have to pretend to have forgotten."*

*"What makes you think I'm lying?"*

*"You're good, I'll give you that," Beyond Birthday admitted. "But your eyes betray you. You know exactly who I am and what I want with you."*

*"If you want to use me as some kind of revenge against Light, it's worthless," Yamamoto refuted. "Maybe you don't know this, but Light and I ended things months ago."*

*"I would assume so, given he wiped your memory and sent you here," he purred, and Yamamoto got an idea as he looked at the ground. "But while you're close, I'm not here looking for revenge on Light. In fact, it's not personal to your ex at all."*

*That caught Yamamoto's attention, and he let that be made clear so he could put his plan into action. "It's not?"*

*Beyond Birthday grinned, seeing he was making headway. "No, it has nothing to do with him directly. He's merely the only thing my true target will pay attention to, so naturally, I have to beat Light Yagami. And for that, I need his weakness." His grin turned malicious. "So, I'm here because I want to team up with you for revenge against those who have wronged us. Broken up or not, he'll come for you if he believes you're in danger."*

*Yamamoto fell to the ground. All this time, his injury had really just been collateral damage to get to someone who was connected to someone else? It took months for him to heal, and it turned out it wasn't even personal?!*

*All the more reason that when Beyond Birthday bent down to help him up, he grabbed some dirt and threw it into Beyond Birthday's eyes. Using the mere second that it slowed his attacker, Yamamoto dove off the cliff and into the water.*

*He came up just behind a waterfall, covering his mouth with his hand in an*

*attempt to be as quiet as possible. He had to get out of here. But how? His phone was no doubt ruined. Was it safe for him to get out of here?*

*Alright, breathe. Think rationally. Beyond Birthday wasn't going to do anything if there were a lot of people around. So if he got to a crowd, he would be able to escape. He wasn't far off the coast, so it wouldn't be far before he could just walk and not swim, but he also knew he couldn't use the small boat he had used to get out here. He would have to swim and risk Beyond Birthday diving down to get him.*

*He remembered what Light had said about the kidnapping, and how despite attempting to fly to get away, Beyond Birthday had grabbed onto his leg and pulled him back down. Could he get away? He wasn't like Light. He was just a normal person!*

*But what other choice did he have? He had beaten Beyond Birthday once before with just a sheathed sword, so if he had done it once, surely he could just swim to safety and get out of here.*

"So you swam to safety?" Light asked, needing to sit down so he could process the guilt threatening to consume him. He thought Yamamoto not having his memories would protect him from Beyond Birthday, but it just made the situation worse!

Yamamoto nodded. "Thankfully, the beach is known for being relatively quiet, so I had the option to scream if he came for me. I didn't have to, and I got on a bus and used someone else's phone to call my parents that I wasn't safe and needed to hide. But I can't shake the feeling that he let me go." He shuddered before crossing his arms, his justified anger coming back in full once he had explained the circumstances that brought him here at Light's request. "So, would you like to explain why you wiped my memory at all? Don't even *think* about lying to me."

Light faltered, trying to think of something to say. "I'm sorry..."

"Did I ask for apologies right now?" Yamamoto snapped. "I asked for an explanation."

"I—"

"Don't give me that guilty expression!" Yamamoto stood up. "You're the one who made a choice to wipe my memory without talking to me first, and now I have the right to demand an explanation!" He laughed involuntarily, running his hand down his face. "Do you have any idea how difficult it was for months to act like I knew nothing when the

whole time I was asking myself why you did this and didn't at least talk to me!?"

Light sighed. "I did it to protect you. I would rather you hate me than see you dead. I figured he wouldn't bother to go after you if you were in a different region and didn't remember anything." He groaned. "It should have occurred to me that he would actually go after you even if we were broken up, or that you would get your memory back if you came in contact with proof of those missing memories." He squeezed his eyes shut but forced himself to open them again to maintain eye contact with the best friend, former boyfriend, that he had so greatly wronged. "I should have talked to you about it. You're right, and I don't expect you to ever forgive me. I'm sorry."

Yamamoto's anger faded slightly. "So this had nothing to do with thinking I would expose your secret?"

"What?" Light's genuine shock slipped through. "I get I made a horrible mistake, but you really thought I would think so little of you?"

"Just checking," Yamamoto crossed his arms, looking Light over as though deciding something. "God, you really look torn up about this." He let out a long-suffering sigh. "Alright, I forgive you. Just know, we are not getting back together. Relationships involve trust, and while we can still be friends, you broke my trust way too much for me to consider anything more." He didn't give Light even a moment to react before grabbing him by the collar, eyes flaring with fury. "But if you *ever* pull that shit on me again, we're done. Are we clear?"

That was...way better than Light had expected that conversation to go. "You have every right to despise me, you know?"

"Oh, I know I do," Yamamoto said, suddenly becoming cheerful as he picked up the grimoire and sat down at the desk, "But being petty won't solve anything. We have bigger problems to deal with after all."

"Bigger problems?" Light sat down next to him, noticing Yamamoto reading through the passages he had added about Aizawa. "Are you sure you're not mad?"

"Oh, I'm still furious," Yamamoto admitted. "But I know you weren't being malicious, so I have decided to channel all of my frustration into taking out Beyond Birthday." He pointed to the passages. "So what happened with Aizawa?"

"It's a long story, but he's debatably undead and loses the ability to

recognize people when feeling threatened."

"Hm..." Yamamoto flipped through the book some more. "And does Kira have the same power you and Beyond have?"

"Yes, Kira does." Light looked behind him to where Ryuk was watching the encounter in fascination. Though Ryuk didn't seem nearly as surprised as Light was that Yamamoto didn't despise him forever. He had prepared for that, and yet not only was Yamamoto not hating him, but he had managed to fool him into thinking he still didn't know anything for months.

"What's this about a compass?" Yamamoto asked. "The first step before we take out Beyond Birthday is that we need to focus on Kira. The last thing we need is that asshole gathering allies."

Light looked over that passage in the grimoire that he had started making. "It's an experiment I'm planning, to learn how to track anyone with this power using this compass. I'm working with my friends in the NPA and L to solve the Kira case, but I've been planning to use this, so I can locate Kira and Beyond Birthday whenever I want to. I haven't done it yet since it's risky to test it on my own power source."

"So where can we get another power source?" Yamamoto inquired. Light shrugged.

"Honestly, Kira's the only one I can think of who would have one to test it on. But that kind of defeats the current purpose of this experiment. It would be useful in the long run if this ever happens again, but it would be useless to locate the current Kira."

"Hm..." Yamamoto grinned playfully. "Are you saying you would rather reject a challenge of catching Kira the normal way? That's not like you at all."

"And what makes you think that I am rejecting a challenge?" Light asked just as playfully, leaning back in his chair. "I'm in a game with L right now, and if he wins in finding Kira first, he gets to learn what the source of my power is. The compass would just make it easier to beat him. Though..." he grinned. "You're right that it's no fun to challenge myself the normal way. The compass can wait as a reward to make sure we can locate Beyond Birthday and get the jump on him."

"I like the way you think," Yamamoto stood up, stretching. "So it's settled, we'll catch Kira, take their power source, use it to test the

compass, and we'll take out Beyond Birthday!"

"Hold on, 'we'?" Light asked. Yamamoto nodded.

"Yeah. I'm joining the task force. You're not exactly in any place to stop me, now are you? Sachiko already told me you're a civilian on the task force, so clearly, it's possible. And Beyond Birthday might not think slashing me down the back was personal, but for me seeing him die is very personal."

"L specifically requested people for the task force," Light insisted. "And you could get hurt again."

"Really? Because how I see it is Beyond Birthday came after me regardless, so there's no reason I wouldn't." He rolled his eyes. "Oh, this is about L's confidentiality and not wanting to see his face thing, isn't it?" Light nodded. Yamamoto huffed, taking his sword out of its sheathe to inspect it again for any sign of the water having done damage. "Fine, then. I'll just handle this my own way."

"Your own way?" Light asked, and Yamamoto nodded.

"Beyond Birthday wants to find out your weakness. It's a good strategy, and that's true in a game like this and in fencing, to find the opponent's weakness and exploit it." He put his sword away. "Simply put, I'll figure out Beyond Birthday's weakness so we can exploit it when the time comes. I actually have a hunch on what his emotional weakness is, so now I just need to determine physical."

Ryuk laughed. "I wonder how he's gonna do that."

"Daiki," Light pleaded, "You're not going to put yourself in danger, right?"

"I'm not stupid," Yamamoto reminded him. "But I beat him once before, so clearly he has one. All I have to do is get stronger so I can repeat everything that happened in that fight to see what I did to take him out." He paused. "Though, to properly repeat it, I'll need someone who can move faster than most humans."

Light grinned as an idea came to him. "I have the perfect person to help you."

# Chapter 34

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Ah, memories," Ryuk said fondly as he pulled out the talisman from the box Light was going through of his old childhood toys. "What was it Shuichi called this? Oh, that's right: your favorite otherworldly Cthulhu tool."

Light had to fight back on laughter as he took the talisman from Ryuk since that had been what he was looking for. "Ryuk, why do you remember all of that? I was a baby."

"How could I not remember that? It was the first month of being out of the Shinigami Realm, and you were the first to introduce me to actually interesting humans."

"Wait," Light blinked a few times as he shut the box and put it back at the top of his closet. "There were other humans before me?"

"Not in any way that matters," Ryuk replied casually. "They all screamed and gave the notebook back to me. Most didn't even use it." He shrugged. "That's part of why I decided to do this whole experiment. Though sometimes I do wonder what would have happened if I had come to you later in life."

"That's a good question," Light pondered it for a few moments before deciding, "It certainly would have been a boring seventeen years."

"Almost eighteen," Ryuk corrected him, grinning, which caught Light's attention as a matching grin formed on his face.

"Ryuk, are you by any chance planning something for my birthday?"

Ryuk ruffled Light's hair. "Well, if I am, I'm not gonna tell you about it. You'll just have to wait and see."

Before Light had a chance to develop a scheme to figure out what Ryuk was planning early, he jumped at the sound of his door being thrown open as Sayu came bounding into the room. "Light! Light, guess what!"

Light blinked as he noticed her apparent glee. "What is it?"

"So I just got off the phone with Dad since he couldn't get ahold of you," Sayu said, and Light looked to his dead phone where it was charging since he had forgotten to plug it in last night. "And Kira responded to Beyond Birthday's broadcast, and the postmark was from Harajuku."

"Wait, hold on," Light blinked a few times as he processed what she just said. "Kira responded to it?"

"Yeah," Sayu said, "According to Dad, Kira seemed pretty upset too."

*Kira and Beyond Birthday haven't made contact yet.* Light thought back to what he had been discussing with Yamamoto. *That's good. It means I still have a chance to catch Kira and get the Death Note before he does.*

He checked outside on the balcony to make sure nobody was around before turning back to Sayu. "Let Mother know I went to help the case, alright?"

"Don't get kidnapped," Sayu said, grinning, but her eyes indicated she was dead serious about this.

Light rolled his eyes. He had magic now. He wasn't going to get kidnapped. "I'll be fine, Sayu." He turned around fully and gestured to his closet. "Though if I end up needing to go to Harajuku..."

"You're letting me help dress you up," Sayu said. Her tone left no room for argument, and Light shrugged.

"Alright, I'll keep that in mind." He pulled his jacket on and took off into the sky, keeping a hand over his left ear. Ryuk slowed his own flight and frowned when he noticed what Light was doing.

"Light-o? Whatcha doing?"

"It's getting colder," Light replied, and when Ryuk wasn't satisfied with that answer, he elaborated. "I need to focus my attention on keeping myself in the air, and the wind making my ear and jaw hurt is distracting." He looked down at the ground hundreds of feet below them. "It's not really a problem, it's just annoying." And why wouldn't it be anything more than an annoyance? He was resistant to the hazards of being this high up. That said, it would be nice to not worry about a distraction making him lose focus.

He landed in an alleyway close to the hotel and brushed down his clothes and hair before stepping inside and heading to the room L

should be in, where he was surprised to see Aizawa in the tracksuit he had been assigned to wear during experiments.

"You got pulled here too?" Light asked, and Aizawa nodded.

"Yeah, I've been practicing with Yamamoto all day. He certainly doesn't wear out easily. Having us train together was a good idea."

It had been the best arrangement Light could think of. Aizawa needed to hone his abilities, and Yamamoto wanted to train against someone with supernatural speed. "I hope he didn't rough you up too much," Light teased, and Aizawa shrugged.

"No, but he said he was going to be doing some more research while I take a look at what Kira's got to say." He gestured at the television. "Ryuzaki, are you gonna play it? I don't have all day."

"Of course, Aizawa-San," L turned on the television, and Light leaned against the table as he heard the recording and recognized instantly that this wasn't the same as Beyond's broadcast. For all intents and purposes, this was probably real.

*"I am the real Kira. The one broadcast on Sakura TV several days ago wasn't me, nor anyone allied with me. I have chosen to be lenient with him for the time being, only because I believe he wishes to cooperate with me to create the new world. But I want to make it absolutely clear that taking harming innocent people is not how I operate. If this person claiming to be me is truly sympathetic to my cause and wishes to be of some help, I ask two things of him: that he refrains from killing aimlessly and that he agrees to abide by my basic principle."*

"Interesting," Light mused. "Very interesting..."

"Agreed," L said, "This will certainly assist in creating a profile for the first Kira. Now the biggest question is what Kira considers to be an innocent person. What about everyone on the task force? Are we considered innocent in that we haven't commit a crime but are against Kira?"

"I think so," Matsuda said. "Kira is saying this in response to the police deaths. While we know only Ukita was on the task force, how would Kira know that?"

"It's a good point," Mogi said, eager to back Matsuda up. "If Kira knew who was on the task force and who was a random officer, wouldn't all or..." he gestured vaguely at Light and Aizawa, "Most of us be dead?"

"That's a good point," Light mused, and he was surprised that Dad spoke up.

"It all largely depends on if Kira is aware of Light's abilities." Dad said, "Higuchi appeared to given he had Light followed, so it stands to reason both Kiras were aware and wouldn't want to have Light as an enemy. Following that train of thought, it means Kira would either avoid Light or keep him close."

"Keep me close?" Light considered that. It had occurred to him after Higuchi had him followed, but could that really be the case? "The Private Investigator that Higuchi ordered to follow me said he was told to observe my stance on the Kira case, and my relationship with my family. While I am reluctant to believe there is much in common between the two Kiras, that might be something worth investigating..."

"Well, the postmark was in the Harajuku area," Ide said, "And it seems like a lot of the more popular areas are gaining a better public perception of Kira, so we could always take a look around there."

Light's brow furrowed as he walked over to the computer that Ide was sitting at, surrounded by clutter and books on the hotel table. The charts on the computer did indicate the estimated number of supporters in any given area, and Ide was right that more densely populated areas were more in support of Kira than less populated parts of Japan.

And that made a lot of sense why Light thought about it. In Sayu's weekly reports about what she learned in school about the Kira case, he had noticed in her surprisingly well-organized files that she had a list of celebrities who were endorsing Kira, and there were a lot of them. Of course, these areas would support Kira more.

"I'm going to investigate Harajuku," Light decided as he headed towards the door. "I've got a gut feeling we might be able to find something there."

He felt a hand on his wrist, and he turned in surprise to see it was L. "Light-Kun, I wish to go with you."

"Huh?" Light heard Ryuk chuckling as he came over to him. Ryuk looked L over and grinned,

"Do you think he likes you, Light-o?" Light also noticed Dad and Aizawa trying to pretend they hadn't heard what was said.

"Normally, I wouldn't consider such a thing," L explained, leaning a bit closer to Light. "But I'm very intrigued by this 'gut feeling' you describe. Could it be you can sense the abilities of others?"

Light shrugged. It wasn't a magic-related gut feeling, but depending on what he found in Harajuku, he might be able to learn something. "Maybe I can, maybe I can't." He looked up at the others. "But if we're all going to be getting information around the city, we should split up into smaller groups."

Matsuda's eyes lit up as he grabbed onto Mogi's arm. "I can take the Shibuya area with Mogi! I know every corner and can show you around." It didn't escape Light's notice that Mogi was flushing slightly, but he didn't say anything besides just nodding along.

Dad rolled his eyes at the sight. "Alright, I'll go with you two, so you actually stay on topic, Matsuda." Matsuda pouted in response.

"Come on, Chief, I can be professional. You've known me since I was a kid!" Dad nodded and placed his hand on Matsuda's shoulder.

"I have known you since you were a kid, which is exactly why I am sure that while you are a good officer, you can get distracted in this kind of scenario." He pointed towards Aizawa and then to Ide, who was hiding behind a book and doing everything he could to not be noticed. "You two go with Light and Ryuzaki."

"Nope," Aizawa was already headed out the door, and Ide followed him. "No way I'm dealing with that for a whole day unless I'm getting additional pay for it. Ide and I will go on our own group since Shibuya is a bit too big for one group to handle on their own." He made eye contact with Light, "Just remember to call me if you need anything."

"I will," Light said before pulling L out the door as well. "We don't need the others since I know my way around Harajuku."

"You go to Harajuku street often?" L inquired, and Light nodded.

"Yeah, it's one of my favorite past times with my sister. But..." he looked L up and down as an idea formed in his head. "If you're going to come with me to Harajuku, let's have some fun with this."

OoOoO

It took longer than L could have imagined for Light to get ready after he took a stop at his house for some unexplained reason. Light said he was going to be grabbing something!

The door to Light's bedroom finally opened, and L froze completely as he noticed what Light was wearing. He looked incredible, and something about his attire certainly highlighted the concept that he was using some kind of magic in his day-to-day life. It also didn't escape his notice that the parasol Light was holding could function as a cane if he decided to use it that way.

"What do you think?" Light asked, and L looked Light up and down.

"As complimentary as the outfit is, I don't see why this is necessary for the investigation," L said, only to be pulled along by Light into the streets.

"We have to blend in, after all," Light explained. "Harajuku probably isn't like anywhere you've been before, so despite what you may think, I am blending in."

"And did you bring your flute?" L asked, and Light opened the parasol, revealing a special area for his flute sewn into it. "You never explained in full what that flute does besides keep Aizawa-San under control."

"Well, that's for me to know and you to find out later," Light said, taking L's hand again as they ran through the streets. "Come on, let's get something for you too."

...

"Alright, let's see what we're working with here," Matsuda looked through his messages from Light about certain celebrities to look into after the day of investigating and to find any information he could about Kira. So his job today was to look for possible leads but mostly to find any common threads about Kira among the populous of the area he was in. That meant his job was just to be social and have a good time working. *Cool! This is like an undercover mission!*

It was thrilling that he could help Light and Ryuzaki in a way he

actually knew how to do, and they had all needed a day like this. Everyone had been so down lately and focusing completely on their work, so it didn't hurt to have a day with a bit more freedom.

Matsuda turned and noticed Soichiro lingering in the back a bit, watching them with a fond smile. "Alright, should we divide and conquer, or do you two have any ideas of where to go?" Soichiro asked, and Matsuda nodded.

"Well, normally the best place to get information is at a bar, but the day's still young, so we can probably find things just by looking around and shopping." He grinned. "Besides, we can spare some time for fun, right?"

Mogi nodded, and Soichiro was momentarily taken aback, but he gave in with a soft chuckle. "I suppose you're right," but he still seemed somewhat distant as he was examining the people around them. Matsuda's brow furrowed,

"Chief, are you alright?"

Soichiro snapped up, offering a strained but genuine smile for Matsuda. "Oh, yes. I'm just fine. Just a little tired."

This did little to assure Matsuda of his surrogate father's health. "Do you want to head back to the hotel for some rest?" Soichiro shook his head.

"No, no, I'm fine. It's nothing. Maybe we can spare a few minutes to take my mind off things."

Matsuda beamed, using his free arm to drag Soichiro along. "Well then, let's do this!"

...

"So how do you think the others are doing?" Aizawa asked over coffee while he and Ide examined the charts of the area to determine where they should start their mission of the ideas they knew. Ide also had a detailed list of everything they needed in their personal lives if they had time to kill two birds with one stone before picking Yumi up from school.

"Honestly?" Ide asked as he finished marking down possible locations on the map. "Probably at each other's throats with war paint and a pig head on a stick." They both laughed at the visual, and Aizawa considered who would be the first to cause chaos. His bets were on Matsuda and L being the ones to start it somehow while Ryuk laughed his ass off in the back.

He looked over their shopping list, and how Ide had perfectly planned everything, so they were making the most of their time. He always knew Aizawa liked being timely about things... he thought back on everything and wondered what he had done to deserve someone like Ide as his partner in his work and personal life.

He fidgeted with the ring he had been given, a promise that as soon as it was legal, they would be together officially. But...could he do it? Even when it was legal, could he marry after what happened last time?

He shook himself. Of course, he could. Hideki wasn't anything like Eriko. They would be parents together soon, and Hideki was still here even after all of this supernatural nonsense and through his marriage to Eriko. So even if it wasn't documented, they already were together, right? Nothing would change.

Aizawa let out a soft sigh as he stared out the window, brightening when he noticed a bookstore and got an idea. Ide had taken time to make sure Aizawa felt like they were making the most of their time, so Aizawa decided to do something for him.

"Oh hey, it looks like that book you were looking forward to is out," he helped Ide up and put all of their charts into his bag. Ide blinked in surprise, noticing the posters in the bookshop window, and he scoffed, rolling his eyes.

"Looking forward to is a very strong term," he walked into the bookstore with Aizawa and found the book he was looking for quickly. "I swear, I truly have no idea how this guy won a Nobel prize. It's like he doesn't know how people talk to one another." He opened the book to a random page and examined it. "Let's take a look at this... oh yes, yes, God is but a creature created by human imagination."

"That doesn't sound too bad," Aizawa said as he looked over Ide's shoulder at the page. "I know you grew up in a church, but it could be worse."

"No, that's not the problem," Ide explained, and Aizawa softened,

smiling lovingly as Ide's eyes began to sparkle as they always did when he was invested in something, especially in literature. He would give Ide anything he wanted just to see that excitement on his face. "It's the wording. It's terrible!" He held out the book for Aizawa to easier read. "You can tell from his word choices and the connotation behind it that if he got the chance, he'd rewrite reality or kill God or something to prove he's right!"

"Oh my god," Aizawa couldn't help but laugh at the mental image. Even at eighteen, he and Ide had known not to poke God in the eye after what happened while they were babysitting. "I hate to think about what that guy would do if he learned about Ryuk." He quickly got to the check-out line and paid for the book. "Come on, let's get that terrible book. I know you and Yumi will have a blast tearing it apart."

"Bad food, worse book!" Ide grinned as he pulled the book out of the bag they had been given, flipping to the table of contents and then to the page count as he determined how long it would take to finish the book. "I'll have to bring home some terrible fast food or some—"

He stopped walking suddenly, and Aizawa quickly turned around to see what had stopped him. His eyes widened as he noticed Ide had completely stopped, only to pick himself back up and act as though everything was fine.

"Hideki..." he walked over and placed his hand on Ide's shoulder. He looked around before helping Ide sit on a bench. They had been on the police force long enough that sometimes even memories of bad cases could shake them up from time to time. Aizawa understood that feeling perfectly. "What was it?" he asked, and Ide shook his head.

"It wasn't a bad memory of a case this time," Ide said after a few moments. "I just saw a family walking by. Loving parents, two kids. And..." he exhaled sharply. "If it weren't for all this Shinigami nonsense, I could have lost you forever."

"I guess that's true..." Aizawa admitted, not that he liked to think about it. Perhaps the most unsettling part was that even when he let Light look into his head, he could never remember—

*"Let go of me!"*

And for a brief moment, Aizawa could hear his own voice from that night, and he saw it, almost as though he was an outsider looking on. He could distantly feel panic as he fell down the stairs, as though the

whole world was in slow motion.

He caught a glimpse of Eriko's face. He saw her anger morph into terror. What? Why would she be afraid? After everything she had done to make him bruise and bleed, why would...?

He snapped out of it and rubbed his head. He glanced at Ide, who was watching him worriedly. "I'm fine. I just...I think I had a flashback."

"Are you okay?" Ide asked, and Aizawa nodded.

"Yeah. Certainly added a lot more questions than answers, and it clearly wasn't the full story, but I'm glad to know there is at least *something* in my head about the event."

"You're bringing that up in therapy."

"Damnit, I knew I wasn't going to escape therapy," but despite his annoyance at the therapy arrangement, it was nice to know that someone cared. He quickly looked up and noticed something that caught his eye, helping Ide up as they examined a poster on the pole.

"Oh, Misa Amane's on tour?" Ide took the poster off the pole. "I'll have to tell Yumi." He turned and noticed Aizawa's brows were furrowed. "You noticed it too? The tour started not long after Beyond Birthday's broadcast that badly damaged Kira's image?"

"Yeah, though it looks like a lot of celebrities are trying to make headlines about whether they're for or against Kira." But something felt different about Misa Amane. Perhaps it was the religion-based jewelry that had caught his eye, but he made a note to bring it up later. For the time being, while today's mission was primarily gathering intel about public perception to determine if Kira was making any PR moves, he couldn't help but feel they should be doing something.

He turned to grin at Ide as an idea came to mind. After all, he had an advantage that Light was the only other member of the task force to have. He had a connection to the notebook. Not to mention he and Ide knew what Kira's weapon was.

"You know, I never thought I would suggest this, but let's relax," he grabbed onto Ide's hand to pull him along. "Maybe head back to the bookstore for a while, get some lunch, pick up everything on our shopping list, and pick Yumi up from school."

"What about investigating?" Ide asked. "You usually like to be productive during work hours."

"But I am being productive," he pointed out, "Another advantage to this whole Shinigami nonsense. We don't need to investigate like normal officers, and we'll look much more natural if we're going about our day-to-day lives. Even if we don't learn anything about the investigation, at least we'll get to have fun and be productive in getting groceries." He turned to face Ide, holding out his hand. "So how about it? We haven't had a day for just the two of us for a while."

Ide brightened, taking Aizawa's hand. "I'd love that."

...

Matsuda and Mogi had completely forgotten what they were doing.

Soichiro sat on the bench outside the store and watched the two of them through the window. He had long since given up on keeping them on track and decided to let them have fun. It was so rare to see Mogi get out of his shell even slightly, and if Matsuda could achieve that, then Soichiro considered that a success. He remembered back when he was young, and it was Sachiko cheerfully dragging him places to get him out of his shell.

He was sitting positioned near a cafe, observing his surroundings as he kept an eye out for any black notebooks like the one Light had. He knew it was unlikely he would find someone with a Death Note out in public, but with something as inconspicuous as a notebook, he supposed the chances were never zero.

But he ended up just observing every small detail about the people that caught his eye and made a game about imagining what kind of background they came from and how much would they indicate just from their body language. He had already pinpointed one relationship that would not last and one that most likely would.

Even as he tried to distract himself, he felt something burning in the back of his skull as though he was being watched, and he had to turn around to see what was going on. However, there was nothing. No sign of anything at all.

*I'm just being paranoid,* he told himself. *I'm in a crowded space. There's nothing to worry about.*

He snapped around as he heard the sound of a yelp and then laughter, and he turned to see Matsuda's pants covered in pink glitter. "What did you do?!" Soichiro asked mostly in exasperation.

"Sorry," Matsuda said sheepishly, holding up an empty container. "I didn't know it would open that easily."

"Why am I not surprised?" Soichiro vaguely gestured at Matsuda's pants. "Do you want to head back, or are you just going to stay like that."

"I don't mind it!" Matsuda said cheerfully, and then he opened one of the bags full of stuff he and Mogi had gotten. "Chief, look at all of this!" He then looked up. "Also, I managed to gossip with some of the girls in the store, and I learned about some kind of underground meeting of Kira worshippers if you wanna check that out."

Soichiro blinked. Of all the things he had anticipated, that certainly wasn't it. A possible lead? "We'll have to look into that." He gestured for the boys to follow him along. "But for now, let's see what else we can learn."

"Oh! Mogi, come look at this!" Matsuda suddenly dashed across the crosswalk with Mogi, and Soichiro could only groan as he watched them. This was going to be a long day.

...

Light had been right that the Harajuku neighborhood was like nothing he had experienced before. It was crowded and extremely loud, but it was alive with bright colors and scenery that seemed to belong only in one of the storybooks at Wammy's House. Everyone was dressed up in bright colors, and he tried to follow along with Light's explanations of all of the styles. Lolita fashion alone had five sub-categories that L could remember!

From what Light explained, Harajuku fashion was more or less wearing what style best suited you and not being afraid to go all out. So anyone could dress however they wanted without being judged at

all. While L wasn't sure how he felt about being here instead of just hearing about it, he already knew he would need to tell Mello about this, and he would be rushing down in an instant.

But the one thing that L couldn't determine how to handle was the shopkeepers. There was nothing wrong with the shopkeepers. They were all very kind....a bit too kind. They were very eager to help him into things that L could barely handle, to which L gave a polite but curt refusal. Thankfully, Light had picked up on this quickly before L had needed to say anything.

"Yeah, this whole thing can be a process. I remember when Sayu brought me here," Light chuckled fondly at the memory and held out an oversized black and white hoodie for L to touch. "How is this texture?"

"It's...tolerable," L decided after a few moments running his hands along the soft fabric to ensure it didn't suddenly become unbearable. He cocked his head as he noticed that Light was once again staring at his feet. He had done that multiple times now, so there was likely a reason. "Light-Kun, why are you looking at my feet?"

Light didn't answer right away, before glancing ever so slightly to his left as though he was listening to someone L couldn't see. "I'm going to grab something," Light said, "I will be right back. Just try on everything that you liked, and I'll be back in ten minutes at most."

L groaned begrudgingly, but logically, he knew Light had a point with this tiring process. If he was going to further investigate Light's abilities to see how he investigated something with a powerset similar to his own, he needed to be able to blend in.

He couldn't help but feel it was both frustrating and all the more exciting that Light wouldn't just tell him where his powers came from. While it did make the investigation significantly more challenging since Light had the upper hand in finding Kira, that just made it all the more exhilarating! When else had he ever had a rival who not only was his intellectual equal but also had the upper hand? He couldn't just ignore a challenge like this, no matter how irksome needing to find a disguise was.

He heard a knock on the door and opened it just a crack as Light came in and locked it behind him. In his arms was a white box, and L pressed his thumb to his lips as he examined it.

"Please tell me that's not fifteen-centimeter platform heels," he said,

cringing at the idea. "While you may have a point about disguises, I am drawing the line at that."

Light almost snorted at the mental image L in platform heels provided. "No, no. Dark magic aside, I'm not that much of a sadist." He helped L sit down and opened the box. "I actually asked for Watari's help on this the other day, and I'm glad they were finished today."

Watari? L's interest was even further piqued as Light pulled out a set of flat white shoes, and L quickly noticed something different about the interior. "Are there orthotics inside?" He inquired, and Light nodded cheerfully.

"I noticed how the arcs or your feet are collapsed, and wanted to do something about it," he smirked a bit. "And preferably not put you through hell with platforms. Even if your feet would allow it, I just can't see that working out for you."

But L was completely stunned as Light grabbed onto his foot as though to examine it. "What gave it away? I didn't tell you anything."

"I studied anatomy to pass the time after graduating high school," Light explained as he showed L his foot. "Even from a glance, it's obvious. But other than that? The first thing I noticed is that you hate socks, which alongside the way you always tend to slide out of your shoes whenever possible, led me to the theory that socks don't fit quite right on your feet and bunch up in the wrong places. I got a look at your feet a few times, and I noticed the problem, so I decided to ask Watari about it." He rolled his eyes. "And just know, even if I hadn't noticed, I still wouldn't have forced you into the stuff outside. If looks could kill, those poor boots would have been reduced to ash."

Light had really noticed all of that so easily? L's mind was completely blank, and Light changed his grip on L's foot.

"Do you mind if I try something?" Light asked. "I've been doing it for myself since my leg surgery, so I want to see if you respond well."

"Sure," L said. Was he going to do magic? After all, he had noticed that red glow around Light's leg occasionally. Was that what he was referring to?

It wasn't. It was a form of foot massage that L had only briefly heard of. Light worked quickly but efficiently with his thumb inching across L's foot and moving it around from time to time. L had to ask. "What are you doing?"

"Reflexology," Light explained, "I would do a normal foot massage, but I find this helps kill two birds with one stone since the hands and feet theoretically correspond to organs and systems of the body."

"You are manipulating the rest of my body just by accessing my hands or feet..." L's eyes lit up, and Light scoffed as he finished working.

"I wouldn't say it's what you think it is, but it does help alleiviate stress." He slipped L into his shoes and helped L stand. "Oh." He pulled out a black face mask. "I also got this for you so you can hide your face even more." He looked L up and down. "You look great, by the way."

L turned back to look at himself in the mirror, and immediately he realized how much Light was accomodating him. He had an oversized hoodie to fidget with the sleeves, loose black pants to allow movement and crouching, and they even had big pockets to store candy.

Light was...not what he had expected. The image he had of Light for so many years of a child with supernatural abilities was only a small piece in the puzzle that was Light Yagami. Part of him realized that his burning desire to know the source of Light's powers wasn't even the floating apple from years ago. He wanted to know the person behind the image he had creative.

"Sorry for putting you through hell," Light said. "While I'd rather see you momentarily annoyed than possibly dead, that probably wasn't the most pleasant experience."

Without missing a beat, L leaned towards Light. "Will you tell me your secrets to make up for putting me through hell?" Light shoved him out of his personal space but was still grinning to show he wasn't at all uncomfortable.

"You wish. What I can do is take you out for some sweets." He took L's hand as they quickly left the dressing room to pay for the clothes. L watched in astonishment as Light could so easily communicate with the shopkeepers. Despite the massive secret he carried, that didn't show at all in his body language. And Light smiled as they were walking away, once again as though he was hearing something L couldn't. But if L hadn't been trained to be observant, he may not have caught that.

And it was then that he was even more certain than before. Solving the mystery of Light Yagami would be the greatest victory of all.

OoOoO

It was just before dinner when everyone made their way back to the hotel. Light and L were the first to arrive and were in the process of sorting their candy into groups when Aizawa and Ide came in, and Ide was carrying behind him a wagon of books and bags of what seemed to be groceries and baby supplies.

"Woah, looks like you two had a fun day," Light said, and Ide didn't pay him any mind as he sat down and was already pouring through yet another book on what Light noticed on the cover was mythology. Aizawa sat down next to him, nudging Ide to finally look up from his book.

"We decided to take advantage of my less than normal investigation methods to get some other things done too," Aizawa explained, looking around the room in confusion. "Where's the Chief?"

Just as he said that the door opened, and Soichiro walked in looking like he had been to hell and back, dragging a still-giggling Mogi and Matsuda into the room. Everyone instantly noticed Matsuda was covered in glitter, not just on his pants but his entire outfit.

"What happened to all of you?!" Ide asked in exasperation, and Soichiro sat down, carding his hands through his hair.

"It was chaos," he said. "When I heard he would be investigating, I did not think that entailed nearly as much socializing and chaos as what actually happened." He looked at Matsuda and groaned. "Or for Matsuda to almost bet away our money at the bar."

"Hey, I won it back, didn't I?" Matsuda pointed out, and Soichiro just sighed, but despite how tired he seemed, it caught everyone's attention that he actually had at least some fun and was trying to be responsible.

"You and Mogi are both grounded until further notice. I just need a moment of golden silence."

"Silence may be gold," Aizawa pointed out, "But never forget that duct tape is silver."

Light stared at Aizawa in astonishment. "How did I survive you being my babysitter?"

"We were younger and harder to annoy," Ide replied. "That and duct-taping an adult's mouth shut is different from a child. We have standards, you know."

"Don't call yourselves old," Soichiro grumbled. "What does that say about me, then?" He then straightened. "All right, did any of us get any information?"

"Matsuda did mention that underground Kira supporter meeting," Mogi said, and Soichiro nodded.

"And that's something we're going to be looking into. Anyone else?"

Light and L nervously looked at each other. L looked up at Soichiro. "Oh, I forgot it was a surveillance mission. I was preoccupied with observing your son and purchasing candies."

"Don't forget the crepes," Light said cheerfully. "They're incredible, and you went through at least three of them before I had to pull you away."

Aizawa huffed as he eyed the giggling pair. "Alright. I sensed something supernatural while in Aoyama. I can't really describe it, but call it a gut feeling that it was either Kira or Beyond Birthday."

"WHAT?!"

Chapter End Notes

> Sorry this chapter took so long, life's been kinda insane. But I guess this is a late birthday gift to Light? A slightly fluffier chapter!

# Chapter 35

It had been a hunch of Light's for a while that saving Aizawa's life had been through not just using magic but also actively giving Aizawa some of his powers. But hearing that Aizawa could act as the task force's canary was something that nothing could have prepared him for.

"You sensed something?" Light asked. Within seconds, L was all over this, getting close to Aizawa and grabbing his wrist to check his pulse, his eyes lighting up before Aizawa swatted him away.

"If Ryuzaki could stop trying to check my pulse," Aizawa sent L a dark look, "I'd be happy to explain." L backed off but seemed rather put out.

"Apologies, Aizawa-San," he said. "But given our machines are unable to track your heart rate due to whatever means were used to sustain you, checking your vitals must be done manually. I wished to see if there was any indication."

Aizawa huffed. "Fine, whatever, anyway," he pulled a map out of his suit pocket and spread it out on the table. There were already three circles in red marker around three areas in Aoyama that Light presumed were where Aizawa had sensed either Kira or Beyond Birthday. "I was able to sense something in these three areas over the course of the day. I couldn't tell direction, just that the feeling stopped after a short period which probably means Kira moved."

Matsuda leaned over to examine the map. "Hey, those are some areas I heard about Kira worshipper meetings. I didn't get any official dates, but I can go back and look around if you want."

"That would be a good idea," Dad said and noticed Ide wasn't paying attention, too busy reading his new book to care. He rolled his eyes. "But we'll do that tomorrow. Aizawa, Ide, I know you two have preparations to make, and Light, the entrance exam is tomorrow, right?"

"Oh, right!" Light quickly got up and gathered his things. "I need to go over everything to prepare for that." At L's perplexed expression, he reminded him. "I haven't been in school since I was eleven. I continued studying other topics, but I need to refresh on relevant school-related topics. Bye guys!" He quickly hurried out the door, and Dad followed him.

"Light, are you going to join me in the car?" Light spun back around to where Dad was waiting, and he shrugged before smiling.

"Thanks, Dad." He got in the car, but he quickly realized the moment the doors were closed that Dad wanted to talk to him. "What's going on?"

Dad didn't answer immediately. As though contemplating how he would voice his concerns, it took about thirty seconds before he tensely said, "You're very close with Ryuzaki."

"If this is about my secret—"

"This is about your personal safety." Light blinked as Dad sighed. "I just want to remind you that L has been fascinated with you for years because of your secret. He may seem like he's acting as your friend now, but once he gets what he wants, do you really think he will stick around?"

An uncomfortable silence filled the car as Light processed what Dad was saying and its implications. He had known from the beginning that L using him just to learn about his powers had been a possibility, but until Dad voiced that, he hadn't let himself linger on that possibility for longer than a few seconds. Was Dad right? He was one of the best cops out there and had grown up with a background that meant he could trust his gut about people. But...

"L's not like that," he said, but it felt hollow even to his own ears now that he was thinking about it. "At least, I don't think he is. If he only cared about my secret and nothing else, wouldn't he have been more forceful the first time we met?"

He couldn't help but feel grateful for having a parent that listened to him because he could tell that Dad was actually taking into account his thoughts. "I suppose you have a point. I won't force you not to spend time with him, but... can you please promise me you'll be careful? I don't want to see you hurt because you trusted the wrong person."

Light smiled, placing his hand on Dad's shoulder. "I'll be okay, Dad. I'm always careful. And on the smallest off chance that he is the wrong person, I can wipe his memory since I figured out what went wrong with Yamamoto," but even saying that brought a bad taste in his mouth. No matter what, that had to be the last resort. And speaking of Yamamoto... "Oh, I need to arrange the time for us to leave for the entrance exams." He sent Yamamoto a message once they were stuck

in traffic to ensure he didn't get nauseous from texting in the car.

Ryuk took advantage of the car being stopped to peek his head in from the ceiling. "So you had fun, Light-o?"

"Yeah!" he stretched his arms, all the while grinning. "And tomorrow is the first step into adulthood." Getting an idea, he nudged Dad playfully, "Hey, Dad, since I can fly, we can skip the driving practice, right? I'm much safer in the air than driving a car."

"Light, you have to at least pretend you're a normal person," Dad said, rolling his eyes in complete exasperation. "You don't get to use magic as an excuse to avoid driving. It's a life skill. Besides, we both know keeping yourself in the air is draining, especially in the winter."

"Fine," Light crossed his arms, pouting. "Can't blame a guy for trying."

"I suppose I can't." Dad stopped at a drive-thru. "Your mom and Sayu already had dinner. I figured we'd just grab something on the way home so you can study?"

"Thanks, Dad," Light pulled his flute out of his parasol, examining it as he heard Ryuk squeeze into the back of the car with them. Dad looked over at Light and then quickly away before clearing his throat.

"Sorry for ruining your good mood," he said quietly. "I was just worried. That's all."

"Dad, it's okay," Light assured him, placing his hand on Dad's forearm. "You didn't ruin anything. I just hope you're wrong about this one; that's all." He perked up, grinning teasingly. "So how exactly did Matsuda get covered in glitter?"

Thankfully, the conversation became more relaxed as they discussed the day and how they had gotten off track. Trust Aizawa and Ide to get their personal stuff and the case done simultaneously. But none of that managed to distract Light from what Dad said earlier. A million thoughts spun through his head that he hadn't let himself think about before.

What did he feel about L? Sure, he was kind if not a little peculiar, and wasn't great with boundaries, but he didn't seem malicious. But he wasn't inclined to reveal much about Beyond Birthday, so he was hiding something, whether intentional or not. So Dad's question about if L would still be here if he didn't have magic was one he couldn't shake.

He didn't want L to only be befriending him for the sake of his powers, but... that was what he had been warned about ever since he was a baby. And now, that was all he could think about.

But he found that he was given a distraction almost as soon as he got home, finding Ryuk had already set up everything with his textbooks and two cups of apple cider.

"Here we go," Ryuk said, turning on the television. "So I'm thinking spend an hour or so per unit and then play Final Fantasy XII? You haven't touched that game yet and it's been almost a year!"

Light looked around the room, dropping his bag. "You got all of this set up for me?" Ryuk nodded,

"Yeah, you've had a long day and clearly have some stuff on your mind. I checked, and there's leftovers in the fridge if you're hungry later." He sat down crisscrossed on Light's bed, "Go on, get comfortable, and we'll start with..." he picked up the nearest textbook. "Science! Meh," he tossed the book behind him, "You've got that one down already from all that studying your powers. We'll start with math!" He opened the book and flipped through it. "Okay. $6/2(1+2)$, you have one minute."

Rolling his eyes, Light began answering Ryuk's questions, and every time he got a question right, Ryuk tossed a piece of popcorn at him. Needless to say, by the end of the hour, he had eaten the whole large bowl, and he allowed Ryuk to turn on the video game while he opened the strategy guide.

"Now, Light-o, we can practice your reading comprehension with this strategy guide. Look, it's got character profiles in it and everything," he held out the book, grinning as he noticed Light was already getting sleepy, rubbing his eyes with the sleeve of his pajama shirt. "Don't fall asleep yet, kid, we're just taking a break so your eyes don't glaze over from the boring studying."

"Can I get some coffee?" Light asked, and Ryuk shook his head.

"Remember your dad's rule: nothing good happens after 2am. That's your bedtime, and if you drink coffee now, you'll be up all night and not well rested for the entrance exams."

"Why do you care?" Light asked as he read through the strategy guide while Ryuk booted up the game. "I thought you were here just to be a spectator of a good show."

"Exactly! And it's much more entertaining to get involved to play video games and help you succeed so you can get a good job to entertain me further!" He rested his hands behind his head. "I see this as an absolute win." He frowned as he noticed Light had pulled his knees up to his chest. "Hey, Light-o, what's on your mind? I'm not a mind reader."

"It's just..." Light chuckled humorlessly, running his hand through his hair, thoroughly messing it up as he rested his head at the foot of his bed. "I'm just overwhelmed. This whole thing with L, or everything with Kira and Beyond Birthday, Aizawa's whole situation, and now college?" He listlessly flicked one of the pages of the textbooks. "I wanted excitement in my life, but it just kinda feels like a lot right now."

Ryuk considered what Light was saying for hardly a second before he suddenly tugged one of Light's blankets down from his bed and wrapped Light in it as though he was still a young child. "Come on, you clearly need some sleep. I'll play the game and quiz you from time to time until you fall asleep, and your parents owe me apples for this."

Light nodded, already feeling his eyelids becoming heavy as he snuggled against Ryuk. "Thanks, Mom..."

Ryuk didn't move as Light quickly began to fall asleep. He smiled fondly at the little boy he had raised, so close to being grown up. Both as a human and as a Shinigami. But no matter how old he was, he would still be that same child Ryuk had picked up so many years ago.

"Of course, Light."

OoOoO

"You seem unusually tense today," Yamamoto pointed out as they finished the walk to the building for their entrance exams. "Is this about being the first time you've done something related to public education in a while?"

"Yeah..." Light ran his fingers down the fabric of his comfort jacket, jumping a bit when Yamamoto placed his hand on Light's shoulder.

"Relax. This is just the standard exams. The harder ones are later, and

you're like the smartest person I know." He shrugged, "That and you've got superpowers. Even if you don't use them, that sounds like it would give someone a leg up."

Light looked down at the cane he decided to use today. Magic was the thing that kept his leg stable on an off day, even after the surgeries, but the last thing he needed was for somebody to notice that.

"You've got this, Light-o!" Ryuk cheered, and Light couldn't help but smile but quickly masked it with his disappointment to find that they were ten minutes early instead of the three he preferred. Waiting was the worst.

"I got a message from Aizawa that our training's going to need to be postponed," he stuffed his hands in his pockets, "Ex-wife is in early labor, so I take it that means the case will be on leave for a while. It certainly opens up my calendar. I'm thinking celebratory lunch after we finish these damn exams tomorrow?"

Light was completely taken aback. "Like... you and me?"

"Well, maybe," Yamamoto said with a shrug. "We're still friends and haven't seen each other in a while." He then pointed behind him with his thumb. "Or we could take that guy over there who I am positive is L."

"Wait, what?!" Light spun around, and Yamamoto was correct when he said it was L. "Ryuzaki, what are you doing here?"

"I figured I'd take the entrance exams," L said casually. "I've heard college is fun as long as you don't die, and seeing as I will be on Tokyo for a while, I don't see the harm," he noticed Yamamoto and offered his hand to shake. "You're Daiki Yamamoto, correct? Light-Kun's told me quite a bit about you."

Light turned bright red as he got between them. "No, I did not! I don't know what this guy's going on about," he chuckled awkwardly. "I just mentioned you were interested in beating Beyond, and you would be able to help Aizawa."

But Yamamoto just smiled good-naturedly until it suddenly became teasing. "Oh, it's no trouble. You've told me so much about the great detective." As he noticed L's surprise, Yamamoto placed a finger to his lips, "Don't worry. I can keep a secret. I only guessed because I've had one too many interactions with Beyond Birthday, and he kidnapped Light over here while cosplayed as you." He gestured with his head at

Light. "Anyway, two of us were thinking of getting celebratory lunch after the exams. Care to join us?"

L nodded. "I would like to know more of Light-Kun's friends."

More of his friends? Light let his concerns fall into the back of his mind. If L wanted to know more about Light's personal life unrelated to magic, maybe he really did care.

"Well, we should probably get inside then," he said. "Entrance exams are going to start soon."

Once he was inside, he thankfully got his number relatively quickly, noticing Yamamoto assigned to the back of the room while L was a few rows behind Light. Light was the last of the three to be assigned a seat, and as he sat down, he had to remind himself to be confident. This was a new experience, and it took a bit longer than it should have to realize where he should put his cane, but he figured it out by slipping it under the desk, his brow furrowing when he noticed a small scrap of paper on the ground. He moved to pick it up and gasped when he felt the rush of magic that could only have come from the Death Note.

He stuffed the scrap in his shoe and hurriedly sat up. *What is a piece of the Death Note doing here?* He couldn't help but glance around, searching for the Shinigami attached to this notebook. It wasn't surprising that there was no Shinigami to be found, but... Why would Kira or Beyond Birthday leave a piece of their Death Note here!? More importantly, it was likely placed here so I could find it, but that would mean the Shinigami must be here since I wasn't given my number and spot until a couple minutes ago, and I didn't see anyone drop anything.

But he didn't get the answer to his questions until the end of the final testing day, and he couldn't help but be grateful for how easy the exams were; otherwise, it may have been slightly difficult to get a perfect score with how distracted he was.

Yamamoto and L hit it off and discussed possible cafes to go to for lunch and the possible desserts available when Light saw it. The Shinigami flying just above the school building, far too high for its human to be visible.

*So there is a Shinigami here. But what is Kira doing at a place like this?* His eyes flitted around the area for any indication of who the Shinigami was attached to. *Ryuk didn't follow me today, and nobody's*

*addressed me by name, so Kira shouldn't know that I am Ryuk's experiment. Don't make eye contact. Walk naturally.*

L stopped when he detected Light had stopped walking, and despite Light masking his concern, L and Yamamoto were about to see right through it. "Are you okay, Light-Kun?"

Light nodded. "I'm fine, but I have to do something real quick. Text me where to meet you, okay?"

Yamamoto grabbed Light's wrist, "Light, you're not about to do something dangerous, are you? You saw something, didn't you?"

"Yeah," he pulled his arm away and offered a reassuring smile. "But I'll be alright. You know I can take care of myself. I shouldn't be long." He looked towards L, "But I need you to get Ryuzaki out of here before my presence draws attention to him." L's brows pressed together, but he didn't get a chance to say anything before Light was hurrying off in another direction, so if the Shinigami did follow him and wasn't just waiting for Kira, he wouldn't be anywhere near L.

Just as he expected, the Shinigami swooped down to see him once they were out of earshot of anyone. "You're Ryuk's experiment, right? Kira said you'd be found here. You would be a high school student if you weren't top in the nation and graduated."

It was pointless to pretend he wasn't Ryuk's experiment. The doll-like Shinigami had no doubt seen his name by now. He glanced around to make sure there were no onlookers. "So, is Kira close by?" He asked. "I would assume that Kira was taking the entrance exams, which means Kira is my age."

"Kira just wants to know what side you're on." The Shinigami replied, and Light couldn't help but wonder why Kira's Shinigami sounded so timid. He would have to ask Ryuk about this later. "Your father is the NPA Superintendent and working the case, correct?"

"You won't get anywhere eliminating the task force." Light insisted, and an idea popped into his head. This Shinigami seemed easily fooled. "I don't wish Kira harm, but Kira is naive, and I need his notebook." And just as he expected, the Shinigami's expression hearing the use of a male pronoun betrayed him. "Or... Kira's a she, am I right?"

"What?!" The Shinigami's eyes widened considerably, and Light shrugged his shoulders subtly.

"It doesn't matter." He assured the Shinigami. "I only care about things being interesting. As long as she doesn't cross the line and target innocents and is more careful about the justice system, I don't care."

The Shinigami relaxed, actually giggling a bit. "You really are Ryuk's boy."

"So do I get to be introduced to Kira?" Kira must be in the area since he estimated with Ryuk that Shinigami could only be about fourteen kilometers from their notebook and, therefore, their human.

"Uh... how about at the entrance ceremony in April?" The Shinigami offered hesitantly, "I think you're applying to the same college."

That captured Light's interest. So Kira was a student not unlike him. It wasn't likely she would attend under her real name, but he would still check the databases later for the exams to see if he could find any names that stood out.

"Alright. Let's make this a game." He smirked as more ideas came to him. He could easily use this. "I know she's a college student my age and was in Aoyama the other day. If I find her first, she has to let me use her notebook for an experiment of mine. If I can't find her, I applaud her intelligence and will help her hide from the police."

It didn't matter either way. He knew he would find her. Even if he had to keep his terms with Kira a secret from Dad until he found her, it was even less relevant since Aizawa could sense her and would now be able to see the Shinigami. But since Aizawa would be busy, he didn't have that advantage, which was a relief since it would be no fun if he didn't feel inclined to use magic to find Kira. That would be no fun at all, so it was Plan B. Not that he needed it since he now had a profile for who Kira was, and he could easily go undercover into those Kira worshipper meetings Matsuda mentioned.

The Shinigami seemed to accept his terms and flew off to report to Kira, and Light checked his phone to find a message from both L and Yamamoto asking if he was alright. He assured them that he was fine and would meet up with them shortly. First, he had to tell Ryuk what he had discovered.

He quickly flew home and landed on the balcony, where Ryuk was eagerly awaiting his arrival.

"How'd your exam go?" He asked. "Did you get any Kira updates?"

"Yeah, I ended up talking to some ragdoll-looking Shinigami. Very timid, and easily tricked into giving away that Kira's a young woman around my age."

"Gelus?" Ryuk burst out laughing, "I should have known! Used to watch the human world with him. He must have decided to actually interact with the humans he watched."

"So you know who Kira is, if you used to watch humans with Gelus?" Light asked, and Ryuk shook his head.

"If Kira's your age, I've got no idea," he said. "But I don't think you have to worry about it." He grinned as he took a bite of an apple. "So, what are you gonna do?"

"Kira and I are going to play a game," Light said, and Ryuk's eyes lit up. A game was the perfect thing to entertain them both.

"Oh? What kind of game?" He asked, and Light thought about his answer, realizing what he would have to do.

"A game that involves..." he shuddered, "Getting a social life in my age group."

...

The entrance exams had been surprisingly easy. Thanks to Sara helping her study in the breaks between her tour, it hadn't been hard to sneak in so she could get closer to Light and let Gelus talk to him. She likely wouldn't attend classes often if she got in, but getting an extra education didn't hurt. It would also assist in getting a better understanding of her biggest obstacle to delivering justice—the one person she couldn't kill.

"So Light wants to play a game?" she asked as she finished styling her hair for her performance tonight. Gelus nodded.

"Yes," he perked up as he remembered something, "It seemed he was talking to someone he didn't want me to see. I didn't see the name, though."

She considered the possible implications of that. "Hm. I'm still not sure

about the eye deal, but... if there's someone he doesn't want me to see, it likely relates to the investigative team." She thought back over what Gelus had told her about the meeting. "He's neutral, but he needs my notebook for an experiment?" She pursed her lips. "As long as that experiment gets rid of that fake Kira nuisance, I'm actually inclined to help him."

"Do you mean you're going to reveal yourself to him?!" Gelus quickly began to panic, and Misa rolled her eyes,

"Of course not. Light says he's neutral, but his father is the head of this investigation besides L, and that means if he finds something out, odds are the investigative team will learn quickly, and I doubt they're as inclined to leave me be." She spun around in her chair to face him, hoping he would understand her thought process. "I've already preserved Kira's following after the fake Kira incident, so I don't need to worry about that, at least." She then giggled as an idea came to her. "From what I've gathered, Light's not a very social person, so if he wants to contact me for his experiment, he's going to be widening his social circle to make it easier to slip in. That could be my opening to get closer to him."

She would need to think later about how she would get close to him. It shouldn't be hard if she could determine where he would search, but doing that took a level of stalking she wasn't sure she would be comfortable with. But the alternative was a private investigator, and she already knew how badly that would play out.

*On the surface, we'll be friends, but we'll actually be trying to figure out the other person.* "I can make this work." She turned back around to apply her lipstick. "If he wants to play a game with me, I'll gladly join in, and if all I have to do is hide my identity as Kira from him, he'll help me out come April." She smiled at her reflection in the mirror. "Well then, Light, I accept your challenge."

But she didn't see the sudden somber expression on Gelus's face. If she had seen it, she may have needed to change her plans.

# Chapter 36

Yamamoto was truly a lifesaver, especially in a social context. Whatever someone needed, he knew someone who fit the bill. And in this case, that involved socializing, it only took a few weeks before Light was able to have lunch with five new people at DisneySea, most of which Yamamoto explained had applied to the same college as him. The only reason it took so long, Yamamoto explained, was that his friend Hana was from out of town and would be coming down in February anyway. That, and Light had to admit he procrastinated a few days on telling Yamamoto what he needed.

Interacting with other people his age was...an experience, to say the least. It wasn't bad by any means; on the contrary. But he would have been much more comfortable being alone and investigating away from other human beings, just himself and Ryuk. So he spent most of his time sitting in silence with a young man named Mukaido, who spent most of the time working in a sketchbook for his internship.

"So, first day interacting with actual peers," Yamamoto mused as he brought Light home that night. Light shrugged mostly to himself, and Yamamoto cocked his head slightly as his relaxation turned to concern. "You okay?"

Light snapped out of his trace. "Oh, yeah, I was just overthinking things," he slowly moved towards the door, "I should probably head back inside before Mother begins to worry about me."

"You said Kira may try to approach you," Yamamoto pressed, stepping forward and closer towards Light. He kept his voice low so nobody else would hear them. "Do you think it happened?"

"I don't know," Light said before he chuckled, "It was just my first impression, so I doubt I would find Kira immediately." He opened the front door and stepped inside. "So, uh... I'll see you in a few days?"

Yamamoto nodded. "Sure," he then perked up and dug into his bag, tossing a small box to Light, which he had to remind himself to catch with his hands and not his mind. He opened the box and saw twelve small cookies inside. "I saw you eying those earlier, figured you could enjoy them as a birthday treat."

"Oh shit!" Light quickly looked behind him to make sure his mother hadn't heard him curse. "I forgot it was my birthday tomorrow."

"Honestly with whatever's going on with you and mortality," Yamamoto placed his hand on Light's shoulder, "I'm not surprised you have a terrible concept of time." His hand lingered for a moment, prompting Light to look up at him.

"Daiki? Are you okay?" He asked. Yamamoto nodded, stuffing his hands back in his pockets, chuckling awkwardly.

"Yeah. Just..." he shrugged, mostly to himself. "When you go off to become some almighty god or whatever it is you're doing, don't forget about me, okay?"

Light softened. How could he ever forget his first love? Even if things had changed, those days weren't so easily going to leave his mind. Hell, not even magic could erase them. "I'm not going to be forgetting anyone." He turned to enter his house, but Yamamoto grabbed his hand again.

"Promise me, Light. You won't forget," his voice was as firm as his grip. Light's brow furrowed. This had been something on his mind for a while.

"What is this about?" He asked, but Yamamoto kept his head low, gritting his teeth.

"Promise, Light. *Please."*

Light slowly nodded. "I promise I won't forget." He moved his hand to comfort him, only for Yamamoto to brighten visibly. Thankfully, it did reach his eyes. But his eyes never lied. There was still an underlying concern he didn't seem to want to talk about.

"Good," he said, turning around to walk back to his hotel. "Happy Birthday, Light." With that, he walked down the street until he was out of sight. Light hesitated, looking back up to Ryuk.

"Do you mind...?" Light asked, but Ryuk had known what the request was before it was asked, already following Yamamoto to make sure he got back safely.

With peace of mind, Light stepped inside, loudly calling, "I'm home!" and laughing as he heard his parents and Sayu scramble to hide their birthday preparations.

"Light!" Dad leaned on the table awkwardly, obviously trying to hide something behind him. "How was your day? I thought you would be

going in through your balcony."

"My day was good," he said, leaning against the wall at just an angle that Mother and Sayu could finish stuffing things into cabinets without him being able to see. "I talked to some people, a lot applying to the same college."

Sayu gasped dramatically. "Oh my god, Light, you did it! You actually interacted with other human beings your age!" She bounded over and nudged him with her elbow. "Now was that so bad?"

"No," he said, yawning, "But I am going to head to bed. Talking to other human beings is exhausting." He waved goodnight to everyone before quickly heading upstairs. But he waited just out of their line of sight, feeling like a young child again, seeing how Mother would react. This was what she always wanted, wasn't it?

Though what he heard surprised him. Mother sounded slightly concerned, "I wonder what prompted him to try making friends. I'm happy for him, but did any of us talk to him about that? Is this real, or is this in response to something?"

*Huh, looks like Mother really had grown to know me to be able to tell that.* He heard the sound of footsteps indicating Dad was walking over to her.

"It's probably in response to something. This is Light we're talking about. But whatever the reason is, it's none of our business, so let's be happy for him."

Light smiled, hurrying back upstairs, beaming when he saw Ryuk grinning lazily on the bed, paper already out for Light to write down all his thoughts about his new companions.

"Alright, Light-o! Time to tell me everything going on in that brain of yours." He rolled over and pointed at the clock. "We gotta stay up until midnight, so I can give you your birthday gift!"

"I am very curious what that gift is," Light said, deciding not to get changed into pajamas just yet, opting to instead sit at the desk to write down his thoughts. "You've been mentioning it for weeks now."

He thought back on his profile of Kira and then to everyone he had talked to. It was statistically unlikely Kira was among them, at least not yet, unless she naturally had a way in...

Hana and Shiori didn't seem to fit the bill whatsoever, and if he had to guess, their stances on Kira would range from apathetic to being fully against Kira. Now, the way Kiyomi carried herself, she might support Kira, but would she be willing to take the initiative?

But the last woman with them was the one to catch Light's attention the most. The girl sitting next to Hana, Tachibana, had asked to tag along with her today since she was apparently from the Kansai region and didn't know anybody since she was just here for university. He couldn't quite get a read on her; he hadn't gotten a chance to talk to her much.

He decided to circle her name for future reference. He would have to run a background check on her, but it would be much easier if she attended the same university. Or maybe if he was suspicious, he could ask Hana? But Hana wasn't going to be in town for long, so could he?

OoOoO

"Alright, cough it up," Hana said, watching Misa remove her wig and colored contacts, neatly putting them back where they belonged as she sat down with Kuro. "Why did you want me to call up Yamamoto and ask to hang out and see if Yagami would be there?"

"I've heard a lot about him," Misa said, "And from my research, Yagami and Yamamoto used to be rivals in the fencing academy before Yagami left. I figured they'd still know each other."

Hana nodded, "Uh-huh, uh-huh, sure, sure, sure. What's the real reason?" She raised her eyebrow, sitting down next to Misa. "Look, I won't try to force it out of you, but could you at least give me a hint as to why you want to meet this guy but not as yourself?"

Misa sighed. She had known going in that Hana was going to catch on to what was happening. Saying it was just because she was a rising star and wanted to meet Light outside of that wouldn't work, so she didn't even bother.

She cautiously looked up at Hana. She knew Hana would never betray her, but how would she react if she knew...? Gelus was seated just behind Hana, his mouth agape as he began flying around the room, trying desperately to think of some way to get out of this.

Misa hugged herself, though it was mostly because she was cold. Still, Hana seemed to believe it was a self-soothing gesture. "Will we still be friends?" She asked, and Hana visibly tensed.

"Misa, what's going on? You know I wouldn't leave you. What could possibly be so bad that you think I would leave," she placed her hand on Misa's, "I'm your best friend!"

"And me?" Misa looked up at Hana before quickly looking away. "I'm Kira." Hana's eyes widened, and Misa continued. "Light Yagami is an experiment of the Shinigami, the same beings that give me my power. I want to know him without him knowing my identity so that I know where he stands since I can't get rid of him."

She looked back up to Hana again to gauge her reaction. *Please, Han, I know you won't betray me, but I have to make sure. I don't want to have to kill you.* And it would be far too easy to kill Hana and frame this Kira imposter, so the only concern Misa had now was the plea that Hana would understand. Surely, as her best friend, Hana would understand why she had to do this. This was the right thing to do, and Hana would see that, right?

It took Hana a solid few minutes to wrap her head around what she was hearing, her expression almost mirroring a fish with her mouth agape, but once her brain finally booted back up and allowed her to realize what was in front of her, she blinked.

"Huh. That is... not as bad as what I was imagining." She leaned back on the bed, nodding to herself as she continued wrapping her head around this. "So... you're just killing criminals now? That's what you do? You couldn't just go into law enforcement like a normal person?"

"Nothing would get done!" Misa pointed out. "If I want to make a change in the world and make sure nobody else deals with the nightmare I did, I have to do it outside the system! Besides," she waved her hand nonchalantly, "I find that having worshippers is way more fun when they don't know who you really are and can't stalk you."

"That's... actually a good point," Hana laid down on the bed with her hands behind her head. "Well, I guess I have to help you now, don't I?"

"You don't have to get involved in this if you don't want to, Han," Misa said quickly. "You just have to keep the secret."

"No, I need to at least be somewhat involved," Hana said, "Someone's

gotta make sure you don't go mad with power, after all. On two conditions," she straightened back up, looking Misa in the eye. "No killing innocents, and you've gotta get rid of that Beyond Birthday wackjob. Yamamoto's my friend, so I'm not letting his attacker get away." She held out her hand to shake. "Got that?"

Misa eagerly shook Hana's hand. "You've got a deal!"

OoOoO

"It's midnight!" Ryuk cheered, flying over to Light and removing the pen from his hand, sticking it back in the cup, and helping Light to his feet. "You are officially eighteen!"

"Probably not yet," Light said, rolling his eyes, "I doubt I was born at exactly midnight."

"And I don't care about technicalities," Ryuk said, "Now turn around." He seemed really excited about this, so Light turned around without a fuss. Though he wouldn't have fought it at all anyway. He felt his heart racing slightly, bouncing on the balls of his feet despite his best efforts to contain his own excitement. What was this going to be?

Ryuk placed his hand on Light's back, making him jump slightly, but he quickly contained himself. He gasped as he felt something come out of his back. He turned around and—

Wings. Real, black-feathered wings, almost like the angel wings in the stories he had read.

"Woah..." his eyes lit up as he moved his hand to touch them, laughing as he felt the tickling sensation. This was real... these magnificent wings were part of his body now.

"Happy birthday!" Ryuk cheered. "I noticed keeping yourself up with telekinesis was draining, so I asked the King to let you have real wings. You're basically a baby Shinigami now, kid!" He peeked his head between Light's wings. "They'll let you fly faster than any human can see, and before you ask, they come with the necessary heat resistance. And to top it all off, no one except those who touched the notebook can see them, and they don't interact with the human world, so you don't have to worry about them knocking into things. Also,

they're retractable, so don't worry about that."

Light dove at Ryuk, clinging to him in an embrace. This was real! He really had wings of his own! "I love it! Thank you, Ryuk!"

Ryuk smiled, returning the hug. "You're welcome, Light-o." He brightened. "Now, what kind of gift would it be if you didn't try them?"

Light's eyes widened. "Oh, right!" he opened the balcony door, experimentally extending his wings. They were huge! That made sense. They would have to be huge to carry him, even if he was pretty skinny for his age.

With an experimental flap, Light was sent rocketing into the air with greater force and speed than telekinesis had ever allowed. He had to scramble to stop himself, realizing he was already halfway across Tokyo.

"There you go!" Ryuk cheered, flying next to him only a few seconds later. "You're a bright kid! This is farther than most baby Shinigami get for a few months."

"I have to hear stories about when you were a baby Shinigami," Light said, struggling a bit to keep himself in the air without going higher. "Please tell me you remember some."

"Even if I did, there's not much to say." Ryuk said, leaning backward as he dramatically wailed, "The Shinigami realm is so boring!" He looked over at Light. "Now, focus on where you want to go and roughly the direction it's in, and your wings should figure it out."

"Okay," Light nodded, psyching himself up. He knew where he wanted to go! *Let's first start small.*

He flew downwards into Tokyo. As he looked around, he realized that while time for him was flowing normally, it was a lot slower for everyone else. He had time to react as he found the right house, peeking through the window to lay eyes on a wonderful sight.

Aizawa and Ide sat in bed together, holding their infant son, Nozomu. He hadn't seen much of the two since Nozomu was born last month, but it was good to see he had nothing to worry about.

And Aizawa's demeanor was wildly different than the depression he had suffered when Yumi was born. He was smiling, even laughing at

his son's antics. Of course, why wouldn't he be happy? This time around, he had a shot at a good life. He wasn't trapped anymore, and he never would be again.

He said something to Ide, but Light couldn't tell what it was, but he knew that was their business. He just wanted to see his friends again, knowing that after all these years, Aizawa was truly happy.

Light took off into the sky again, already knowing his next destination as he flew over the ocean, flying lower so he could run his hands through it. Any strain he had felt from manually carrying himself was nonexistent now. He could travel the world in the blink of an eye if he wanted.

He decided to fly higher. It felt so good with the wind blowing through his hair. He had dreams of flying through the night sky alongside Ryuk before, but they were nothing like this. And this wasn't even a dream! This was real!

He was able to watch as the sky changed from night to day as he crossed to the other side of the world, landing on the dock at the lake Dad had taken him to. It must be sometime in the early morning, not long after sunrise.

Dad had been right. It really was beautiful here in the mornings. Light bent down to the water, placing his hand in and recoiling at how cold it was in the winter. He probably should have thought of that.

Ryuk landed next to him, relaxing in one of the chairs still out. "You know," he said, "If you go to Europe, you can drink now."

Light couldn't stop his sudden laughter. "Of course, that's immediately where your mind goes." But... he thought back on L telling him about growing up in London. That had sparked his interest in seeing the United Kingdom. "Well then, let's go!"

He jumped in his excitement, flying back into the air as the possibilities whirled in his mind. So many things were open to him now! He could see anywhere he wanted in a fraction of the time. He could explore the world and learn everything he had dreamed of since childhood without worrying about costs or time wasted. He couldn't wait to tell Dad about this. Could he carry people with him? How fast exactly could he travel? He would need to test all of those things!

All of his thoughts were brought to a halt when he sensed something during his journey over the United Kingdom. He had sensed that

before... his stomach dropped. Beyond Birthday?!

He considered his options. Should he wait? Should he go home and get weapons? No... he decided to head down there. He had wings now, so he could escape if he had to.

He ended up landing in a field somewhere in Winchester, keeping his feet a few centimeters off the ground to keep from making noise. What was he doing here?

He didn't know what to expect when he found Beyond Birthday, but he knew that what he found was undeniably not it.

Beyond was crying. He was sitting alone in this field on his knees. Light's breath caught in his throat as he saw the reason Beyond was crying: he was kneeling at the foot of a grave.

*What? Who is this grave for?* Light moved the slightest bit closer to get a better look, but Beyond Birthday straightened suddenly, wiping his eyes.

"So you finally got your wings," he said, his voice cracking despite his best efforts to hide it. "After all this time, and only now are you a proper Shinigami." He finally turned his head to look at Light. Despite the humor in his tone, his eyes were dead. His eyes narrowed. "What do you want? I'm not particularly in the mood to fight."

Light's brow furrowed. He lowered himself to the ground completely, knowing Ryuk was just out of Beyond's line of sight. "What are you doing?" He asked, stepping a bit closer and noticing the grave didn't have a name. There was only the letter A alongside a birth and death date. Whoever this person was, they died young. "What...?"

Beyond's mouth twitched. "I take it your dear L hasn't told you about this. Any of this." He chuckled bitterly, his hair curtaining off his eyes. "Typical. Always hiding something, even from his darling fixation."

Light didn't let himself think on that for a moment. He was more fixated on how dirty the grave was. That wouldn't do at all! He flew back to Japan and quickly returned to the grave with a pail of water so he could clean it.

Beyond cocked his head quizzically, and Light explained as he began cleaning. "At least in Japan, letting this grave become dirty is disrespectful." He tried not to think about who he was talking to and how weirdly normal this conversation was. Well, not normal, but for

two kids tied to Gods of Death, this probably did count as normal. Maybe he could finally get some answers on what he was dealing with. *That* would be a nice birthday gift. "All of this is about him?"

"If you dig him up to get more information, I'll go after your family." Beyond Birthday said immediately, and Light scoffed. If this bastard even tried to go after his family, Light wouldn't hesitate to throw him back in the ocean, but his demand was reasonable.

"Of course not. I only raise unburied corpses." He gritted his teeth as his mind wandered back to that threat, turning back to Beyond with fire in his eyes. "Why did I have to get involved in this? I didn't ask for this, nor did my friends and family!"

Beyond stiffened, but he didn't respond with anger like Light expected. He must have been out here crying for a while if he was so drained that he didn't even seem to care. As he spoke, he sounded almost resigned, like he had no say in this either, "Maybe you were just in the crossfire at one point," he said, "But it's too late to go back now. You're in this whether you like it or not."

Light's brow furrowed. "And what is 'this' that you refer to?" What was going on? Did this have to do with Kira? Was this purely about L?

Beyond didn't say anything, but his expression did give away this was far more than just whatever feud he had with L. But he put on a mask of amusement, placing his finger to his lips and winking. "Well, I can't tell you all my secrets, now can I?" He stood up, revealing his own brown wings. "Goodbye, Light. Let's meet again under less favorable circumstances."

Light watched him fly off to wherever it was it he planned to go next. He considered following him but decided he wasn't in the mood for a battle today, and it seemed Beyond didn't want one either. But what the hell was that? And who was this A person?

There was only one way to find out. Light looked back at the massive home not far from the hill and flew over to Ryuk. "That was weird."

"You're telling me," Ryuk said. "Well, what do you know, that kid's got a human side after all."

"And I want to know what answers I can find in there," Light said, gesturing to the building. "But I have a feeling if I go in there, I'm going to be getting into stuff about L as well. Is that a bad idea?"

"Kid, listen," Ryuk placed both hands on Light's shoulders, his expression serious until he couldn't contain himself any longer and laughed. "Am I really the right person to ask if you want me to talk you out of it?"

Light couldn't help but laugh as well. "Good point." he looked back at the building, "Well, I'm in this whether I want to be or not, so I have to understand at least who A is if I want to understand anything." He took off and assessed the security, finding a blind spot by one of the windows he easily slipped through.

But what he found made him immediately need to know more than just what was in this room.

Physically, the room looked fine. It was untouched and incredibly dusty, but looks may be deceiving. There was more to this room than met the eye, and what it told him was more than he had hoped.

The death date on that tombstone was only a few years ago. And without any doubt, that lined up with what his gut was telling him.

Years ago, A died in this room.

# Chapter 37

Light had always known L had skeletons in his closet. He would have to for his work as the world's greatest detective to remain so anonymous. To have such power and renown, it was only common knowledge he would have to get his hands dirty. In that way, the aura of death in this room—no, in this entire orphanage... it made sense.

He shouldn't be surprised by this. And he wasn't surprised by the concept of L being tied to death as twisted as this. Why else would Beyond Birthday be so driven by revenge that he would attack Light just for being a fixation of L's?

But to attach the title of L to the death in this room and the rope coiled neatly on the side table was completely different from attaching it to the man he was getting to know and maybe even called a friend.

"Looks like I was right!" Ryuk said, but Light noticed even he wasn't laughing. "Despite everything, Beyond Birthday has a human heart."

"Huh?" Light turned around to face him. "What are you talking about, Ryuk?" But even as he asked, he knew exactly what Ryuk meant. Beyond Birthday was the same limited immortal that Light was. And while Light was raised from infancy to understand the inevitability of death, Beyond Birthday had the Shinigami Eyes. He had always known. And yet the death of A was still enough to drive him mad with thoughts of revenge?

"It's nothing to be ashamed of," Ryuk said casually. "Having a human heart is exactly why I did my experiment in the first place. Even if I raised you from birth to understand all humans die, you're still going to want to delay it because of attachments. A Shinigami's mind and a human heart. That's what makes you and him unique."

Light placed his hands on his hips as he looked up at Ryuk. "So what's a Shinigami's heart like? Surely you wouldn't want your apple provider to die."

"Well, that is true," Ryuk mused, "But don't forget before the king took a liking to you, I was ready to watch you grow old and die." He shook himself, suddenly jumping back. "Anyway! None of that matters! We're here now, and you know your rival's motive and that L's keeping it from you! Whatcha gonna do?"

That was a good point to consider... what was he going to do about this? "Well, I can't exactly tell L I know about this orphanage," he shrugged, "Then he'll find out I can actually fly now, and while Aizawa having some of my power and the ability to jump off skyscrapers with no damage implies I can fly, I'm not keen on revealing the wings just yet." He stuffed his hands in his pockets and looked around.

*This room wasn't emptied out, so I can probably find as much information as I need here. But that won't actually answer anything, now, will it? Even if I learn his initial motive for kidnapping me last year, that won't solve anything now.*

*"Maybe you were just in the crossfire at one point,"* Beyond Birthday had said, *"But it's too late to go back now. You're in this whether you like it or not."*

"It's better this way," Light said nonchalantly. "I don't really have much reason to be here since, at this point, it's more of a Shinigami thing than a personal thing. And for that..." he looked back up at Ryuk eagerly, "That means we might have to try to solve the Kira case in a reasonable time frame instead of playing games."

"Eh?" Ryuk cocked his head. "Why's that?"

"Gelus clearly knew who I was," Light explained calmly, leaning against the windowsill and glancing around the room again. "Which implies other Shinigami would know too. Chances are the Shinigami that stay in their own realm have a better understanding than Shinigami on Earth. And my fued with Beyond Birthday has lasted a lot longer than Kira, so Gelus and any other Shinigami who comes down is bound to know more."

"And I can't just go up there and ask them?" Ryuk asked. Light just shook his head,

"Think about it. If you were your devastatingly bored siblings, would you reveal information to the guardian of one of two half-Shinigami?" He raised his eyebrow quizzically, a twisted grin forming on his face. This was getting far more interesting than he could have imagined, and now he knew more about L's past.

Of course, he had no context, but even just this information would be enough to level the playing field. L could investigate him all he wanted, but now Light had reason to investigate L.

However, he didn't have time to investigate further as he heard the doorknob turning. Being seen here would be far more trouble than it was worth, so Light was quick to leap out the window, flying just out of sight at the top, slowly peaking his head down to see who had come in.

What he saw wasn't what Light expected.

It was a small white-haired boy, probably no older than twelve if Light had to guess. The boy hesitated in the doorway before his brow pressed together, and he began walking towards the window. Light flew up to the roof quickly as the boy opened the window again and looked outside. "B?"

*B?! This boy knows B?*

But it seemed the boy gave up on his momentary hope, scoffing and playing with a strand of his hair. "I should have known. He's not coming back." He turned away from the window as he closed it, and Light peeked in again as the boy dug under the bed, pulling out a Wara Ningyo doll. He smiled at the doll, and it seemed he was... repairing it. He was talking to it, though Light couldn't hear what he was saying.

Who was this child? L had ties to this orphanage, but what for? He supposed he could just look and see what this was for, but that was for another time. He had already been out for a long while, so it was probably best he return home.

He didn't fly quite as quickly as he knew now he was capable of, glancing over at Ryuk again. Ryuk told him about the concept of human hearts before, but something wasn't sitting right with him that Beyond Birthday having one as well may be legitimately important.

"Ryuk, why are the Shinigami so fascinated by those like them but with human hearts?"

Ryuk cocked his head before shrugging as he decided to explain. "I've told you before, Shinigami have long since lost any purpose they may have once had. We don't have any drive to do anything because we can't die, and it's too much work to try changing things when it doesn't matter."

His voice was resigned. Even if he could use his knowledge of the human world to change things, it seemed he had already given up on it. But Ryuk... Zellogi made many comments in the short time he was

in Light's custody that Ryuk was different. That Ryuk was young, and he hadn't given up quite yet. And while that was undeniably true, it seemed even the idea of returning to the Shinigami Realm made Ryuk miserable. Though he didn't age, Light could have been easily fooled by the strain weighing his guardian down.

Ryuk suddenly perked up. "But let's take Aizawa, for example. If you had a Shinigami's heart, you would most likely just write his name yourself to put him out of his misery." Despite himself, Light flinched at the idea but listened to what Ryuk said next. "But instead, your motivation to save someone you care about led you to manipulate technicalities and achieve something Shinigami never thought possible. So I suppose that's why the Shinigami are so interested in your heart. It's because you have the drive to do something."

"The drive to do something...." Light nodded. "That's right! I do want to do something!" He dove downwards to the hotel L was staying in. The late hour was no trouble to either of them.

He wanted to know L. It wasn't about what happened at that orphanage or how this related to B's past, but the eccentric detective was more than fascinating in his own right. It was a puzzle he wanted more than anything to solve. Who was L? Who was he, really?

He wanted to find Kira. With how she operated, he strongly believed she was not inherently a bad person. She merely didn't understand the complexities of the justice system. If she were to be taught, she could be an invaluable ally and bring real change to this world.

But most of all... he wanted to know why what Ryuk was saying about Shinigami and humans being inherently different in their hearts sounded wrong. And how did that relate to the Shinigami and Beyond Birthday's return? A thought had occurred to him, but even the implications...

*"Maybe you were just in the crossfire at one point. But it's too late to go back now. You're in this whether you like it or not."*

Was the Shinigami King whom Ryuk got permission from some kind of mastermind in this?

He shook such thoughts away. That was a problem he couldn't ignore, but before he could focus on it, he had to find Kira and gain her help in getting the necessary information to catch Beyond Birthday. Once he had been caught, he could get information out of him.

L was the best person to help him with that task right now. That was why he knocked on L's door in the dead of night.

Watari was the one who opened the door, his expression not letting anything on as he saw who was there. He let Light in without a word, waiting until Light stepped inside to eventually call, "Ryuzaki, Light Yagami is here to see you."

L looked up from the papers he had been sorting, and Light grinned when he saw that spark in L's eyes. "Light-Kun, I didn't expect to see you today. Is it not your birthday?"

"It is," he said casually, sitting next to L and examining the documents L had been sorting, "But didn't I say when I was eighteen I would more officially work with you? Besides..." he smirked, glancing over at L to gauge his reaction. "I had a very interesting run-in with Beyond Birthday tonight, and it left me with *many* questions."

L's expression didn't let on anything, but Light's smirk only grew when he noticed L's eyes were telling a completely different story. Whatever this was, L really didn't want him to know about it.

"It feels unfair that you want to investigate me, when I don't know anything about you, doesn't it?" He leaned a bit closer to L. "After all, both our pasts is relevant to the case."

L caught onto what Light was doing quickly, grabbing onto Light's hand with a wild look in his eyes. "Are you proposing we trade answers to one another?"

"What do you think?"

"I think you're out of your mind," L purred, "I quite like that about you." He leaned his head to the side, eyes taking in every inch of Light to decide which question he wanted to ask. Light knew L wasn't going to ask the easiest question of what Kira's killing power was. He also wasn't going to answer Light's question completely. *Just as well, I want to learn about you on my own, L.*

Light looked up to Watari. "Please bring us some hot chocolate, Watari." Watari hesitated, but one look from L made him nod.

"Of course, Light."

It was better to have Watari out of the room for this question. Light didn't know why, but he could feel in his gut that Watari knew

something about this and didn't like Light's prodding. Especially for this question.

L watched Light silently, his thumb at his lips. "So, what did B tell you that has you so curious?"

"That technically counts as a question," Light quipped, but he shrugged. "I'll allow it. My question is... Why does B blame you for what happened to A?"

Light could never have prepared for L's reaction. Of his eyes turning dull, and he sighed, refusing to meet Light's eyes. *What...?* "Because he believes I could have prevented it." His voice was completely monotone as he pulled his knees closer to his chest, his bangs curtaining off his eyes. "I was focused on you, so I didn't see the signs." He suddenly scoffed. "I doubt it would have changed anything. I always hated that program."

*Program?* "What program?"

L looked back over at Light, and his expression was back to amused, though Light noticed immediately that it didn't reach his eyes this time. "I believe it's my turn now, Light-Kun, isn't it?"

That only left more questions than answers, but... Light wasn't surprised by the answer, but he couldn't help but be concerned about it. The program L talked about must relate to that young boy who knew B. Was something happening out of L's control that he got blamed for?

But it was too late to ask now. So Light shrugged, his brows still pressed together. There was no point in hiding his concern at L's answer. "Ask away. You know what I will and won't answer."

"Have you killed someone with Kira's killing power?"

Light froze. Of all the questions he had expected, that was...

"Yes." He sighed, leaning back against the couch and crossing his arms. "I mostly ensure successful executions, though my most recent kill was a wannabe rapist." He sneered at the memory. "He wouldn't have been given righteous justice, and I was standing right there. Anyone would do the same."

He turned his head to determine L's reaction. It wasn't particularly secret information. The only people on the task force who didn't know

were Matusda and Mogi, and he knew they were both on the borderline about their views of Kira as it was, so Light doing something similar wouldn't bother them too much. If L did react negatively, he could change his answer in L's memories.

His lack of concern was only confirmed to be correct when L chuckled. "Am I right in assuming you may have become Kira yourself if things were different?"

"If things were different... I can't say I wouldn't," Light admitted. "If I'm honest, it is part of why I have no hatred for Kira. I'll find Kira, but I have no personal reason to beyond keeping my secret." He picked up one of L's documents, and his eyes widened.

It was a simple enough poster promoting Misa Amane's tour. Now that he thought about it, he remembered Aizawa had a gut feeling this was important, so he picked it up, saying it was probably junk, but his status as the group's canary meant he might as well keep it around.

But after today, he knew exactly why Aizawa had picked this up, and Light couldn't stop the laughter bubbling up in his throat as he made a show of picking up a few extra documents to conceal his thinking.

"Light-Kun?" L asked, and Light quickly righted himself.

"I believe I have a lead into Kira's identity. That's all." He winked. "I'm afraid I can't share it yet, L, I have a secret to keep!"

And finally, L was back to his playfully taunting demeanor, moving into Light's personal space, putting on a clearly fake pout. "No hints at all? You're no fun."

"Really?" Light teased, placing his finger on L's nose. "I think I'm pretty great, and it leaves more room for entertainment for you," he jumped up, waving goodbye. "Race you to finding Kira!"

"It's Ryuzaki, remember, Light?" L called, and Light stopped in the doorway. Time to really have fun.

"I'll call you whatever you want to be called," he turned around with an almost malicious grin. "But you're perfectly happy using your *real* name for the world, so it's not that much different if it's just the two of us, is it?"

L's eyes widened, but Light left before L could say anything to him. Let him have fun with that. It was bound to distract him while Light had a

much-needed investigation to attend to.

He landed on his balcony and hurried to his desk, with Ryuk eagerly following behind him. "What'd you realize, Light-o?"

"Just have to check something quickly," he turned on his computer and pulled up photoshop he had downloaded a while ago out of boredom, pulling an image of Misa Amane from the internet and quickly changing the hair and eye color and drawing on some rather haphazard glasses. It didn't need to be pretty for his current purposes.

Ryuk was looking over his shoulder. "Huh?" He suddenly perked up. "Hey! That looks like that Tachibana girl you met yesterday!"

"Such astute observation skills," Light said, spinning around in his chair and leaning back as he stared intensely at Ryuk, "Though I suspect you already knew that."

Ryuk shrugged as he picked up an apple. "I'm not telling you one way or another until you talk to the Tachibana girl yourself."

"I already plan to," Light pulled out his phone. Yamamoto gave him everyone's phone numbers, so it would be easy to contact her as soon as it was convenient. He was about to call her but stopped.

*No, I have to be smart about this. If I contact Tachibana immediately after telling L that I have a lead, I may be followed, and L will take advantage of that. I can't let the Death Note be discovered.*

He was going to meet her in the forest clearing at night on March 12th. That would be when he could confront her. And it gave him additional time to compile enough evidence besides luck to prove he was correct in his claims.

But something bothered him as he began his research, paying no mind to the late hour. While he expected she would approach him, her face was extremely recognizable. But she was by no means stupid, so while her disguise would successfully prevent anyone else from guessing, why would she run that risk with Light?

So, it seemed she accepted the game but didn't want to wait. *Just what kind of person are you, Misa Amane?*

OoOoO

Gelus told her multiple times that the risks had outweighed any possible reward in approaching Light Yagami early. Even if he had never heard of her, it was entirely possible his Shinigami would reveal something and expose her. But for Misa, she didn't see it as such.

She enjoyed the game, and that offer gave her valuable information about Light's personality. Nevertheless, she didn't want to wait until April to build the new world safely, when he would likely find her anyway with the additional resources at his disposal. He had an advantage, so it was best to reveal herself on her own terms, now that his game confirmed she was safe to approach him.

Though even if Light hadn't proposed such an idea, Misa would still know he was little to no true danger to her. He may not protect her like he said he would if she won, but through Hana, she learned something very important: Yamamoto and Light were ex-lovers. According to Hana, Yamamoto was vague about the reason, but one thing he said was Light would do whatever it took to keep a secret.

Did Yamamoto know what Light truly was, or was his lack of knowledge what ultimately broke them apart? Whatever it was, they seemed to be on good terms now, so she didn't see a reason to think much about Light's personal relationships beyond the important information she could take from that. If Light would go to seemingly extreme lengths to keep a secret, which must have been about the Death Note and his powers, he would likely still indirectly hide her from L.

That said, she couldn't deny the possibility he would just kill her and take her notebook. However, that was easily combated since she told Hana where she was going. If she turned up dead, that should create a considerable problem for Light. But why would Light take the time to ask her to come to the clearing if he wanted to kill her when he could just write her name?

He might have been doing it as a trap for the police, and Yamamoto's comment about Light keeping secrets with either false or the situation had changed. She knew that was a distinct possibility, so she ensured the notebook was hidden somewhere he would not be able to find it, and criminals were scheduled to die ahead of time, thanks to Gelus's advice. It would have been helpful if she could get access to police information to know how Light captured that pathetic second Kira, to understand exactly what she was dealing with, but alas.

Speaking of Gelus... Misa glanced over her shoulder to check if Gelus was still following her. "Gelus, are you okay? You've been acting weird since Light texted me." He hadn't even continued his binge watching of popular soap operas today, or played with Kuro like he usually did. Something had to be wrong.

"I just really don't think this is a good idea!" Gelus squeaked, looking around anxiously. "I told you, approaching the experiment could get you killed, and his father is the NPA Superintendent. And he's got that *thing* on his side!"

"Well, you know I've always planned to talk to him," Misa pointed out, keeping a skip in her step. "If I can't get rid of him, this was unavoidable. All things considered, the fact I'm still alive gives me hope I can bring him to my side."

"You're... very optimistic," but there was hesitance in Gelus's tone, and Misa couldn't help but feel concerned, especially as she heard the sound of footsteps coming... closer.

Misa stopped walking, looking around the dark street she found herself on. She wasn't far from the forest... nobody should be out at this time of night, so why did she feel a creeping up her spine like she wasn't alone?

"Light?" She called, trying to keep the sudden nervousness out of her tone. "Are you there?"

But even before she turned around, she could feel the presence of someone behind her. Slowly, too slowly, she looked over her shoulder, and before she even saw who was behind her, she saw the heartbroken look of Gelus. Gelus, who was shedding tears.

"Why does it have to be this way..?" Gelus whispered. Misa couldn't say anything as her eyes finally processed the stranger who had been standing behind her until just now.

A stranger who was definitely not Light Yagami.

A stranger who was carrying a knife.

# Chapter 38

Light had been content playing his flute in one of the taller trees in the clearing, anxiously awaiting Misa's arrival for their meeting, when he heard a terrified scream from not far away. His blood ran cold as he sat straight up before looking to Ryuk on the branch next to him.

"What was that?" Ryuk asked before ultimately deciding to lounge back and enjoy his apple. "Probably a human dying. Oh well, nothing we can do about it."

It was true... Ryuk was probably right that was the sound of a young woman dying. What else could instill such a sound of fear, confusion, and horror? No... that was more than just the sound of a human dying. Light narrowed his eyes in the direction of the scream, jumping down from the tree and letting the wind catch underneath his wings as he headed in the direction of the sound.

Ryuk's brow furrowed. "Eh?" He jumped down as well to follow Light. "Light-o, what's the point of this? It's against the rules for either of us to save the human. Remember, your wings only cement you're just as bound by the rules as I am."

"I know that," Light said, keeping his pace slow as he looked down at the street to see where the sound had come from. "But that doesn't change the fact it sounds like whoever is meant to die is about to be murdered. Shouldn't we make sure the impatient bastard who would do such a thing is arrested?"

"Well..." Ryuk took a moment before he answered. "I suppose you're right about that." He perched on a powerline, pointing down into the street, "Well, look at that. Looks like it's a good thing we came out here, or we would have been out all night!"

Light looked down at the sight, seeing Misa Amane backing away from a man swinging wildly with a knife. *What a way to go... Of all the ways for Kira to be taken down. To be murdered in this way?* It was fitting, now wasn't it? A killer of murderers ultimately being murdered.

He could see her fear, plain as day. If her weeping Shinigami was any indication, it seemed she knew as well as anyone that this would be the end. But what could Light do about it? From the time he was young, he knew he was bound by the rules of the Shinigami. He could not interfere in this manner... or could he?

His eyes widened as he realized there was something he could do. There was a way he could save this girl without defying the rules. Could he take that chance to play with loopholes? After all, even if all humans had to die eventually, being murdered wasn't a natural way of dying.

He was about to jump down but felt a hand against his stomach. Ryuk shook his head, his voice suddenly firmer than Light was used to.

"Light. You are bound by the rules, remember?" He looked down, and his eyes became somber. "Don't worry. The girl's not going to die."

"What?" Light looked down, and he gasped at what he found.

Gelus had written the attacker's name in his notebook. It seemed even when he knew Misa's time would come within only months of knowing her, he was not able to let her die like so many other humans.

Light's mouth almost fell open as it sunk in truly what Gelus had done, and he could only watch as the doll-like Shinigami was slowly, painfully, reduced to a cloud of glittering dust in front of his eyes. It seemed there truly was a reason Ryuk avoided loopholes in this rule.

Some rules for Shinigami only earned punishment. Saving a human's life when their time had passed earned death.

...

Misa heard the sound of a pen before she had completely processed it, her mind moving at a million miles an hour. Of all the ways for her to die, why did she have to die like this? It was just proof the world she wished to build was barely even close to complete. And Gelus had known. Gelus had known this whole time and let her believe there was hope!?

But as quickly as she braced for the end... she heard the sound of the knife clattering to the ground. "Huh?" Hesitantly, she looked up and was met with her stalker's eyes, moments ago blazing with a desire to kill her, now empty and devoid of life, as he slowly began to walk away. "What was...?"

It took her a moment to process what must have happened. Her eyes lit up as she turned to face Gelus to thank him for saving her—

"Gelus?!"

Misa could barely process the sight in front of her, slowly stepping forward to her friend of many months, feeling his glittering remains falling into her hands.

"Gelus, what is..."

"I... couldn't let you die," Gelus whispered, so weak as his body began shaking. "I'm sorry, Misa. I'm so sorry, I should have—"

"Shhh, shhh," she pressed her finger to his lips, "Don't talk. It's going to be okay." She looked around for anything she could do to help. What was happening? Why was Gelus falling apart?

"I saved up lifespan for you," Gelus offered sheepishly. "When I helped you write names for the new world, so that means you'll have so much more time to live..."

"What?" Misa shook her head vehemently. She understood the implications of what he was saying, but this... This couldn't be... "No, Gelus, don't talk like that! We're supposed to work together to build the new world!"

"Saving a human's life is forbidden," Gelus whispered, but even as he said it, what remained of him fell away. "I..."

"No!" Misa reached out instinctively as Gelus's remains blew away in the breeze, and as she looked around, trying to collect anything of him, it was as though there was nothing at all.

Leaving Misa alone, in the silence, with only the sounds of her racing heart to accompany her. She took a breath, then another, before choking and leaning against the wall, covering her mouth with her hand.

"Gelus..."

Footsteps sounded behind her, this time with no intention of hiding themselves. Misa quickly wiped her eyes before turning around to face whoever was there.

"I'm sorry for your loss."

Light Yagami was standing before her, standing perfectly still. If she didn't know better, she might have mistaken him for a statue designed to be perfection. But she did know better. The Experiment, a child raised by a Death God.

She couldn't get a word in before Light was finished surveying the ground, likely searching for Gelus's notebook that he would never find. If that was his objective in his observation, he didn't say anything on the matter, only gesturing for her to follow him.

All of this was happening too fast. Two minutes ago, Misa was planning to meet this man, but now... now she had lost Gelus, and he was telling her to follow as though he didn't care?

No... that wasn't right. His voice was too soft to not care. That was the only reason she elected to follow him, keeping a safe distance behind him, watching the way he walked, his eyes curtained off by his bangs and his hands in his pockets.

It took her only a moment to realize what he was leading her towards, as the dead body of the stalker who almost killed her... the man who killed Gelus came into view.

Light looked down at the dead body, his gaze that of cold anger as he bent down, wrenching the corpse up by the hair and whispering, "still sleeping?" into his ear.

Misa almost screamed as, as suddenly as the man had dropped dead, he snapped back to his feet, groaning as he slowly turned to face Light. *What was he doing?!* She knew Light Yagami was an experiment, but this was more than she ever expected!

Light only narrowed his eyes at the zombie, pulling out a map and pointing to somewhere on it. "Walk here, then go back to sleep."

The zombie pointed at the map for a second before shuffling past Misa, not bothering to move around her as he left, prompting Light to call after it, "And don't cause an scene!" He let out a long-suffering sigh. "You can never tell with the dead. Some are polite, others are not."

Misa gulped, taking a slow step back from Light. "So... uh... you do this often?"

"More than I would like," Light admitted. "Whenever I find dead bodies, I send them to an alleyway near the police station. That way,

the police can handle it before children end up seeing it." He started walking, gesturing for Misa to follow him again, which she did. "I would have collected him after our meeting, but given you seem close to Gelus, I thought you would appreciate knowing that stalker received justice."

Received justice? Could it be that... "So you do believe in what I am doing?"

Light smiled vaguely, waiting until they stepped into the clearing to reveal anything. And when he did, he pulled something out of his jacket... Misa's Death Note.

Misa's eyes widened. "How did you—?!"

"I have my ways," Light said simply, "A secret drawer inside your shelf. I must say, I am impressed." He opened the Death Note, reading the names inside, "So it seems I was right that Gelus didn't have a second notebook."

Misa snatched the notebook from his hands, holding it close to her. This was Gelus's notebook! He gave his life for her, so she couldn't let someone else take it! "What do you want?" She demanded. Light only chuckled as though he expected such a reaction.

"What do I want? And here I thought this conversation was about what you wanted," he looked her over, noticing she was shaking. As soon as he noticed that, his demeanor changed, becoming much more relaxed and like his age. "I'm not going to hurt you, Misa, really, I'm not. I wanted to meet with you given I found you... though you really didn't help that by giving yourself away." He shrugged. "But to answer your previous question about if I believe in what you are doing... I believe you are impatient."

"Impatient?" Of all the reactions she expected from him, that was nowhere close. "What do you mean I'm impatient."

Light frowned. "I don't know how I could have said it differently," he shrugged, beginning to pace around the clearing. "Like many humans before you, you forget the most important rule: no matter what, all humans die eventually. Even you, with your now extended life." He picked a flower up off the ground, though she couldn't see what flower it was in the darkness. "So what is the point of killing these criminals now? Is it to make a statement? To change the world?"

"What else would it be?" Misa asked. "Your father is the

Superintendent, so he must have seen it. Criminals are living in fear, and eventually, I plan to stop wars. We saw what happened today! That just proves I haven't done enough."

Light's expression turned to... almost pity. "And do you really think anything will change after you're gone? What happens when Kira is no longer around to enforce that law?" He spun the flower in his hand. "Kira will fade with history, as will all your hard work."

Misa froze. She... hadn't thought that far ahead. Surely others would be willing to work for her cause after she was gone, right? But as she thought about what Light was saying, she couldn't help but lean against a tree for support. That random stalker almost destroyed everything she was working towards, and the new world would *never* have come to pass. Was Light right? That something so simple could make it all fade away with time?

"But," Light's words made her look up. "I must admit, I questioned the same thing when I was young. If killing criminals would change the world. I don't dislike you, Misa, and I don't want to see you executed, so I'll tell you what I was told: you can't fix a problem without identifying the root issue." He looked her dead in the eye, trying to determine if she understood what he was saying as he circled around her. "Why do people commit crimes? Why is law enforcement not enough to prevent these crimes? The answer is simple. It's because the system itself is incorrect. To change the world, you have to start from the source, or it will all fall apart with time."

"So what are you saying?" She asked. "Are you saying I should just sit back and watch like you instead of taking action?"

"I wouldn't say sit back," he mused, but he already knew the direction this conversation would head in. Misa shook her head, taking a step back from him and holding her Death Note close to her chest.

"I know you have more experience than me..." she said, feeling her shoulders shake with her breathing. "But I have to make the new world, for Gelus, for myself, for everyone!" She looked up at him, desperate for him to understand as she was practically yelling now. "I can't do what you do! I can't wait anymore! I'll figure it out as I go along, but right now, this is working, and I can't stop now!"

Even as she said this, she knew she was playing a dangerous game with someone far more powerful than her. One word from Light and she would be sent to prison to be hanged, assuming she even could die

soon with Gelus's sacrifice for her. He could destroy her, but she couldn't destroy him in return. Her fate was in his hands.

But it seemed that while Light knew this, he didn't enjoy such a concept because as he closed his eyes, he simply nodded. "I suspected you would say that, so I will give you a chance."

Misa blinked. "A chance?"

"The police are going to find you soon," he warned her, as though such a statement was prepared from the start. Had he truly known this would happen? "I will not get involved. The real battle will be between you and L. In return, I want you to think about what I am saying. I will visit you every two weeks, and you will help me find Beyond Birthday."

That was it? That was all he wanted to say? For a moment, she had feared she was completely out of options, but Light Yagami was content to act as though they hadn't met in exchange for help taking down their mutual enemy?

"If I agree to this," she said cautiously, to ensure she understood what he meant, "It will be as though you were never a factor. L and I will hunt each other down, and you will not get involved."

Light nodded. "If I, for any reason, get involved, you will know long in advance. I would prefer any game I watch to be at least somewhat fair, but it seems I can't have any fun unless I'm only an observer, or else people come find me." He held out his hand to shake. "So, Kira, do we have a deal?"

Shake his hand, and she would have the second-best outcome. She could get the best of L, she knew she could, and she could build the new world and maybe, with time, think on Light Yagami's advice. And he was not going to get in her way.

She couldn't help but feel like this was somehow a trap, that Light Yagami had an alternate agenda, but what other choice did she have? He could have asked for anything, but all he asked for was the one thing she wanted as well.

Hesitantly, she shook his hand. "You have a deal, Light Yagami."

*Don't worry, Gelus,* she vowed. *I won't let your death be in vain. I will build the new world.*

# Chapter 39

Nothing was more exciting than waking up with the wind in his hair, flying through the dawning sky with the freedom humanity only dreamed of. Light looked down at his stopwatch to see how long his experiment lasted. So it seemed that if he desired, he could travel across the entirety of Japan within only half a second, just in time to watch the sunrise on a rock in the center of Lake Kawaguchi. The water splashed at his bare feet as he watched the dawn, with Ryuk watching the waves anxiously.

"I don't get it," he said, "Doesn't splashing water kill humans? Why would anyone want to risk their lives just to see the same thing they can see anywhere?"

"Well, nature is beautiful, Ryuk," Light said, looking over his shoulder. "And it's less about the view and more about the experience, at least for me." He took out his new camera for a picture. "I have the power to go anywhere in the world in the blink of an eye. What reason is there not to savor it?" He scooped some of the water into his hands, throwing it at Ryuk, earning a yelp from the Shinigami.

"That's cold!" Ryuk shouted, earning hearty laughter from Light before he yelped in return as Ryuk took his revenge by throwing even more water into Light's face.

But before Light could retaliated despite his laughter, the moment was thoroughly ruined in the same way most moments were: by a cell phone ringing. Light groaned audibly before noticing the call was from Matsuda. Oh, it was probably time, wasn't it? "Hello?"

*"Hey, Light! You'll never believe what happened!"* From Matsuda's delight, Light already knew this could be either model drama or a massive break in the case with no in-between, *"You know how Kira's MO's started changing in the last week or so? It looks like we're finding out why! The real Kira actually sent a tape to Sakura TV last night! Ryuzaki wanted to wait until you could arrive before we all see it."*

"I'll be there in three minutes," Light said, hanging up before turning to Ryuk. He could be there in a minute, but he had to explain his thoughts to Ryuk first. "It looks like Misa really has taken my advice to heart. I wonder what she has in mind this time. I'll ask her about it when we go shopping."

"Shopping?!" Ryuk let out a barking laugh. "Of course this is how you made friends."

This was the best way to make friends. What better potential friend was there than the girl who understood his powers completely and had a similar goal to him, even if she went about it differently. But that was just an added bonus. Their limited alliance was for nothing more than taking down Beyond Birthday.

But even as he thought that... "Ryuk, what should I do if Misa gets caught? I'm just an observer now. And I can't get attached to either her or L. That's how idiots happen." He put his finger under his chin. "Though L doesn't seem to particularly care... I might be able to persuade him to not imprison her." He shrugged. "Let's see if she learned some patience. Given her rate of killings has slowed drastically and only down to the worst of the worst, I think she might be."

"Or she just doesn't want to piss you off," Ryuk pointed out as they landed in the alleyway next to the hotel. Light shrugged,

"That's possible too." He stepped inside the headquarters parking lot, where Matsuda eagerly awaited his arrival.

"That was fast!" Matsuda said, guiding Light upstairs where everyone else would be waiting. "You must have been closeby."

Light gave a vague shrug in response. "I'm good at getting places quickly." Even as he said it, his wings stretched wide. He had to remember to retract them, but it was so easy to forget when they couldn't interact with the physical world.

*Hm... what would happen if I started a family one day? Would my kids have wings too, or would they have to be given? Actually... how is my DNA impacted by this? I know it wouldn't be before, but now there's an actual physical change. Or a kind of physical? Would it show up in systems, or would it be like Aizawa, where machines can't process it?*

He would need to investigate that later, perhaps when college started and he could get access to the lab. But for the time being, he was content to step into the hotel room, mildly surprised to find nobody besides Dad in the room. "Are Aizawa and Ide not back from daytime-parental leave yet?"

It could never be true parental leave, could it? With Aizawa's struggle to sleep, it had taken two days before he became restless, now

spending the nights working the investigation or in the basement mastering his abilities. Though he did keep a baby monitor with him at night so he could return home to care for their son if he woke up, without waking Ide.

"They are. Actually, they have been for several days now," L responded, stepping into the main room, quick to crouch in his usual chair and picking up a breakfast piece of cake from the tray Watari brought. "Aizawa-San and Ide-San had the first viewing of the tape Kira sent us last night, as it was convenient to hurry over in the early hours. For the time being, the arrangement will be to shift the hours to arrive one hour later in the morning, so we can all be here for the investigation, and Aizawa-San returns during the night while everyone else sleeps."

L was willing to be that lenient with the situation? Light supposed he should not be surprised, given L's apparent history with children, but he found himself stunned nonetheless. "That's very accommodating of you, Ryuzaki."

L simply nodded, offering Light a warm smile, before picking up the remote to turn on the tape. "It is very interesting. I would like to know Light-Kun's thoughts on the matter."

What was Misa going to say? Light focused his attention completely on the screen, noticing that Misa had not changed the swirly font she had used before. Even if she was seemingly taking Light's advice, she was still doing this of her own volition.

*"I have an announcement for the world. It has come to my attention that my work to improve this world was based on false premises. As you may have noticed, I have refrained from bringing justice to as many criminals. Because how can I be sure that these people are guilty when one look at the justice system proves innocent people can easily be condemned. To the one who informed me of this, I would just like to say thank you."*

So Misa wasn't planning to hide that she had met someone? Light couldn't help but feel slightly nervous at the implication, but he supposed that the issues he wished to reform were not necessarily a secret with Dad in charge. With how open Light had been with discovering the Second Kira, his being silent about the first made it less likely he would be suspected as the person here.

Misa's broadcast was not yet finished. *"To the rest of the world, I would like to apologize for my rash actions, with the promise that I will change*

*this world for the better, and this time I will do it right."*

That was the end of the message, though Light could tell she was itching to say more, likely in regards to Beyond Birthday. But mentioning him could be incriminating of Light's own identity. So what was he going to make of this...

L was thinking the same thing. "So what are your thoughts, Light? It's obvious someone has discovered Kira's identity, and this person has managed to convince Kira that he or she is doing everything wrong... but why the sudden shift? Is Kira really that open to criticism, or is there something else...?"

What would he say here if he wasn't the person Misa was referring to? And did it benefit him to keep this a secret? But as he looked over to Matsuda and Dad, waiting for his answer, he realized he didn't want to burden them with the knowledge that he knew Kira's identity and was staying silent because of a deal.

"Whoever found out Kira's identity must have a lot of power over Kira," he decided to say, "While that is to be expected given what would happen if Kira is caught, this feels... different. Why would Kira be so quick to admit there was someone to talk to. Kira wants to protect this person, and it is easier to admit there was someone than to conceal it, which would just put more suspicion on that person if it was a secret. That has to be the reason."

"So it isn't Beyond Birthday then," Matsuda asked. Light couldn't blame him for that assumption, but it was evidently a wrong conclusion, even if Light wasn't the person in the tape.

"No, it's as Light-Kun says," L explained, taking another bite of his cake. "Kira has already established a distaste for Beyond Birthday, so there would be no need to make a statement like this. Not to mention, given Beyond Birthday's MO, that would imply this wasn't Kira at all, and rather him adding to the mystery. While I cannot rule out that possibility, it only sits at 1% when added to Kira's change in MO recently. Kira wishes to protect this person, and by directly mentioning them, Kira is hoping we see this as simply a friend and not an accomplice."

"But I don't think Kira has an accomplice," Light added. Best to get that doubt out of the way before it even entered L's head. Though by the look on L's face, that was never in the cards. "But the fact Kira went out of their way to protect this person means whoever this is has

value."

"I couldn't agree more," L stood up from his chair, picking up a paper bag and handing it to Dad and Matsuda. "Please take this to the crime lab at once. Light-Kun and I will likely review the tapes again to discuss what move to make from here."

Ryuk had to suppress his laughter, given Dad's ability to see him. Light examined Dad's expression. Did he know the truth? It didn't seem he did. Though Light wanted to tell him, the last thing he wanted was to bring Dad any additional stress. He was already worried about the Beyond Birthday situation and Light's growing friendship with L. Learning that Light was communicating with Kira may give him a heart attack!

He knew exactly what L was doing in sending Dad and Matsuda away, and the moment the door closed, Ryuk burst out laughing while L became smug.

"You were so open about capturing the Second Kira. Why are you being secretive about finding the first?"

There was no point in hiding it. It was better for the investigation that L knew anyway. "I don't want to worry my father. For the time being, the fact I was the one to influence Kira isn't hurting anyone, and Dad doesn't need to know."

L nodded, putting his hands in his pockets as he sat back down in his chair to grab more food. "And what reason is there to have met Kira but kept it a secret? Could it be that Light-Kun doesn't want Kira caught for some reason?"

What should he say here? There were multiple reasons, so he could be honest about it no matter what, but was he going to tell the full truth?

"It's... complicated," he said. "The night I went to meet Kira, something happened that made imprisoning Kira both difficult for my conscience and potentially complicated from a political standpoint."

"A political standpoint?" Instead of anger, L's response was the expected intrigue as he examined how Light refused to look at him. "You don't mean Interpol, I know you don't."

Light shook his head. He didn't know enough about Shinigami politics to determine that. He should have Ryuk ask the King's thoughts on Misa. "I can't tell you anything about the political side," he finally

turned to face L, "But what I can tell you is that Kira has gained new life. An execution would be impossible without my involvement, which, if I'm honest, I'm not so sure is the right thing to do. After talking to Kira, I really think change is possible."

L examined every inch of Light's features, taking them in as he tried to deduce what was happening inside Light's head. "When you say Kira has gained new life, do you mean in the same circumstances as Aizawa-San, or something else?"

"Something else," Light assured him quickly. "I had nothing to do with this besides watching. But I do need to be honest and tell you I made a deal with Kira," L urged him to continue, and Light was happy to comply. "In exchange for me becoming an observer, Kira takes my words into account and helps me find Beyond Birthday. Kira has something I need to guarantee how to do it."

L nodded as he thought about Light's words before noticing something. "There is nothing in the arrangement preventing *me* from catching Kira."

So L was perceptive of those kinds of things. That could be interesting... "There isn't," Light said. "I won't hinder you either, and Kira knows this. My attention will be focused on Beyond Birthday, but if Kira steps out of line, I won't hesitate to jump back in and take care of Kira myself."

"Yes, I would suppose that makes sense that Light-Kun would never continue with a vow if Kira did not keep his end," L mused, but when he looked up at Light, it was not with intrigue but with concern. "What is it you are not telling me? Before anything else, I must ask something crucial if we are to continue working together: You are not in danger, correct?"

"In danger?" Light raised an eyebrow before it dawned on him exactly what L was asking. "Oh, you mean about the political stuff. No, I'm safe from that, I'd just rather not get into any scandals," it was the truth, but even as he said it, Light thought back to what became of Gelus right in front of his eyes. Ryuk assured him long ago that he never had to worry about those rules; they would be adapted for him, but now that he had wings, was that still the case?

He snapped out of his thoughts as he realized L was grabbing onto his wrist. It seemed L was not going to let him dodge this question. "What is it you're not telling me, Light Yagami? When B returned from where

you banished him, he came back different. We both know he did. Are you in danger of the same thing?"

He came back different because he learned to use his powers, which seemed to make him even more confident. Light opened his mouth to say as much before realizing what he was doing.

This was supposed to be a game, wasn't it? For L to learn everything? But if he was honest with himself, how could they continue unless L understood the situation?

Things would be different if this was a battle of wits between him and L alone. But Light had already won their first game. He found both Kiras. So what did they do now?

His heart pounded in his chest as L's eyes met his, hearing and seeing that concern that went so far as to become fear. And for the first time, Light almost didn't care about the game, all doubts erased from his mind on whether L could be trusted.

But there was one thing he wanted to know first, and maybe L could give him a satisfactory answer.

"Let's play a game."

L's eyes widened as he noticed the shift in Light's body language, all tension leaving him. He didn't see the stunned Shinigami marveling at the sight of what was about to happen, and even if he could, he wouldn't have cared. "I'm listening."

"Answer my question, and I'll tell you everything,"

He surveyed L's demeanor. The detective eagerly anticipated what the question may be. Light was already confident in his own answer, but what would L's answer be?

"What am I?"

OoOoO

So it seemed L Lawliet proved to be everything the Shinigami King could ask for in a pawn, but a nuisance all the same.

The Shinigami King never paid much attention to the matters of humans beyond their use as prey for his children to flourish, so how was it that this one human could prove to be as vexing as he was? Whether it regards the experiment, the hybrid, or the girl disguising herself as a god, L Lawliet was a factor that must be considered. He was always useful, but it was tiresome to see this human in the middle of every plan without any way to effectively remove him. Not even death would remove him.

The girl calling herself Kira was a fascinating case, leaving Gelus willing to break the rules to save her life, and already it was evident Rem was infatuated as well. But despite the frustration that matter brought, the Shinigami King found he had no problems with the girl herself. Though why was Gelus so eager to die for this girl? She was just another human who would die anyway. Could it perhaps have been because of what Kira offered for the Shinigami Realm just as much as the human one?

But the matters of that girl were of little concern to him for anything besides her purpose. He would leave her to her own devices, and if luck was on his side, L Lawliet's attention would be captured by apprehending her so he could maintain his status as a functional pawn without being frustratingly in the way. However, even if it was not the case, that could work just as well.

It had been easy to sever the hybrid's ties to humanity. He didn't have much to speak of by the time he was found. Nevertheless, it seemed L Lawliet was one he could not be rid of so easily. So why not play into that? Why not take advantage of L Lawliet's growing bond with the experiment to destroy that tie in the hybrid once and for all?

The Shinigami King grinned with malice as visions of the future he sought after came to mind. It didn't matter what the humans did or if they tried to stop what was already in motion. In the end, it would only serve to bring a shining future to the world.

# Chapter 40

L was unable to answer Light's question until late evening, which was unbelievably frustrating. If he didn't have his answer ready from the moment Light asked the question, he could have tolerated how long it took, but that was not the reason he was unable.

The reason was that Aizawa and Ide chose that exact moment to walk into headquarters, and Light was under the likely accurate impression that if they found out about this arrangement, they would not approve. Though that did tell him something rather important, that the Kira task force was protective of Light's secret. Would they go so far as to hide how Kira committed the murders? That was something worth exploring.

The real question was if Light would tell him how Kira killed people. By technicality, their power came from the same source, but it was in significantly different ways. L had no doubt Light would exploit that loophole to give Kira a chance. But what did Light have to gain in all of this?

*"The night I went to meet Kira, something happened that made imprisoning Kira both difficult for my conscience and potentially complicated from a political standpoint."*

What did Light mean by a political standpoint? All he said on the matter was that he wished to avoid any possible scandal, but what scandal could there possibly be in capturing Kira? Did it have something to do with Kira gaining new life?

If he was right in his theory, which he would learn the truth of tonight, he could guess what was happening. But for that, he needed to speak to Light.

"See you tomorrow, Light!" Matsuda called, bounding out the door next to Mogi. Soichiro took a moment to wait for Light before realizing he would be lingering behind.

"Don't stay up too late, Light," Soichiro said before looking L dead in the eye. He didn't need to say a word to make it apparent that through some parental superpower of knowing their children's questionable ideas, he suspected Light was about to tell him something. And with that came the unspoken threat of "break Light's heart, and I'll break you."

Light caught onto this, rolling his eyes in exasperation, "Dad, you know I'll be fine."

Soichiro crossed his arms, not convinced but realizing that as Light was eighteen, he did have the right to tell his secret to whoever he wanted. "Fine. But if he—"

"I remember the protocol, Dad," Light shooed him away, still grinning to show he wasn't annoyed. "Don't you have a date with Mother tonight?"

Soichiro nodded, chuckling fondly. "You have me there. You two have fun," but he stopped in the doorway, "Ryuzaki," L straightened at the sound of his alias. "If you do *anything* to my son..."

"You don't need to worry about any of that, Yagami-San," L assured him, and he meant it from both a fondness of Light and his self-preservation instinct. He researched Soichiro Yagami's background. If Soichiro wanted him dead, the police would not find the body.

Finally satisfied, Soichiro left them alone, and L was speaking before Light could ask if he had the answer.

"You gave me a trick question, Light-Kun," Light's interest piqued at L's words, tilting his head to the side. "You asked me what you are, implying you are only a singular thing. However, I do not believe that is the case. I believe you started human, but you have become partially something else through supernatural intervention."

A relaxed smile slowly spread across Light's face. "And what do you think that 'something else' could be? I think you have enough clues to figure it out."

L couldn't help but chuckle. "Yes, your connections to the concept of death are anything but subtle. Could it possibly be that your other half is a Shinigami?" He didn't wait for Light's answer. "Which means the answer to your question would be that you are Light Yagami, not completely one thing or another."

He knew from the way Light carried himself that he was right, and Light wasn't trying to hide it as he nodded, his relaxed smile turning smug. "It only took over a decade, but the world's greatest detective finally figured it out."

"Don't give me such a hard time, Light," L said. "All I had to go off in that decade was a floating apple." Light nodded to himself as he

realized that was a reasonable excuse for it taking as long as it did. L quickly continued before he got to the explanation, "I presume when you say you will be telling me everything, you will be exploiting a loophole of technicality to conceal how Kira kills due to your agreement."

"That aspect isn't relevant to me," Light pointed out, "The source of my power is only tangentially related to how Kira does it."

"Meaning you have that power, but Kira does not have yours. You got it differently, even with a similar origin."

"That's right," Light moved to place his hand on L's back, and L let him. "Close your eyes," L obeyed, waiting patiently until... "You can open them now."

L slowly opened his eyes and found himself face to face with none other than a Shinigami. "Hello! Nice to meetcha."

L's eyes were as wide as saucers as he took in the sight of the Shinigami before him. "It really is... a Shinigami..."

Light nodded, spinning around to stand next to the Shinigami. "L, this is Ryuk, my guardian."

"And basically his parent," Ryuk added playfully, and though he was clearly saying this to poke fun at Light, there was nothing to indicate he wasn't, to some extent, serious about this role. "Don't get up to any funny business with the kid."

"Ryuk!" Light groaned, burying his face in his hands. "Not you too."

Ryuk ruffled Light's hair. "I'm gonna go down to the apple orchard. You better tell me all about this later." He phased through the wall and took off into the night sky.

L could tell Light was nervous about how he would react to this revelation. Would a joke help in this situation? Yes, a joke should help in this situation. That was what kids at the house did a lot. "I wish Aizawa-San had developed that power from you," he said, gesturing to where there was no sign Ryuk had been there. "It would have saved us some money in fixing that window."

To his relief, this did work to make Light laugh and ease his nerves. It was a lovely sound, and though L had to admit he was rather bad at this whole joke thing, it would have to try again sometime to make

Light laugh. How was he even supposed to do that?

But all those thoughts died the moment he saw Light's wings. As Light slipped on a cloak L always wondered why he owned, he realized that the person in front of him was the real Light Yagami. Moon Night God... he certainly lived up to his name, practically shining in the moonlight.

He never thought much about Light's appearance before besides how he was conventionally attractive by most anyone's standards. That had never interested him; many things were fascinating about Light Yagami besides his looks.

But looking at Light Yagami now, showing him for the first time what he really looked like and who he wanted to be, he could say with confidence that Light Yagami was the most beautiful thing in the world.

Light offered his hand for L to take, slowly lifting off the ground. "Come on, let's get out of here." His smile was earnest. L could see his excitement that this was going well. "Do you trust me?"

L looked down at Light's hand. Did he trust Light? He took Light's hand eagerly, "Yes."

Light pulled him up and wrapped his arms around L's stomach to keep him from falling. "I won't drop you," even as he said it, L felt something holding him up besides Light's own hands as additional insurance of that promise. L looked behind him and into Light's eyes, once soft cinnamon and now blood red as he used whatever magic he possessed to stabilize L. Only once he was sure of his grip on L did that red color fade. "Ready?"

*Ready for what exactly?* Despite that inquiry, he found it didn't matter as he said, "I'm ready."

Light beamed at the answer, and one powerful flap of those wings was enough to send them both into the sky, where L found that even with how far above the world they were, he didn't feel the cold, which Light was eager to explain.

"The wings protect me from the elements, and since I am holding you, that protection will also apply to you. It's harder to fly without wings." His statement was proved all the more by his ability to speak despite what should be a lack of oxygen in their surroundings, solidifying Light's words all the more.

It was always mankind's dream to fly, wasn't it? When L was young, he would have dreams of flying, but this wasn't a dream. This was a reality he hadn't dared to let himself imagine. It was indescribable, soaring through the sky and seeing things he never thought he would see beyond from behind a computer screen.

Light lowered himself as they neared the ocean, mere centimeters from the water, allowing L to run his hands through the water as they went, splashing them both in the process as Light flew back up towards a sky that looked so different when they were far away from the city.

This was... This was more than he could have imagined, seeing the world in this way. Was this how Light always saw things? As endless possibilities?

It could have been hours, it could have been seconds, and L found he didn't care about time for even a moment as Light brought them to a stop at the top of the Eiffel Tower, placing L down as he disappeared and reappeared within only a few seconds, holding a tarte bourdaloue and a camellia flower.

"I hear these tarts are the best Paris has to offer," Light said, sitting on the railing with no fear of falling. He noticed L's inquiry and elaborated. "I have some of every currency for my travels, I did pay for that."

"That quickly?"

Light shrugged. "I work fast." Satisfied, L was more than happy to eat the tart he was offered, though his attention wandered to the flower on more than one occasion. "So... now you know. Shinigami got attached to me as a baby. It didn't start as *me* having powers. At first, it was Ryuk messing with my parents."

"I presume it evolved once you were kidnapped." It must have, right? Light was in mortal peril that day, not to mention the horrendous state his leg was in afterward. If he had his magic back then, would that still be the case? "Did you use magic to repair your leg?"

Light shook his head. "No. That honor goes to *a lot* of physical therapy," he lifted up his pant leg to reveal the scar from surgery. "But even then, it's still not completely back to normal. When I get tired, I usually need my cane more, and I can use magic to stabilize it in a pinch." He chuckled. "But stepping wrong is awful no matter how much power I have."

"I always wondered about that," L mused, his hair falling in his face as he looked down at the city below, reluctant to meet Light's eyes. "I am sorry about what B did to you."

Light gave a nonchalant shrug in response. "It's not your fault. I'm more upset about what he did to Yamamoto than what he did to me."

"What did happen between you and Yamamoto?" L couldn't help but ask. If Light was telling him the truth, could he ask that question? Or was that something he shouldn't be asking?

Light didn't seem phased by the question, though he wasn't fond of the answer. "After Beyond Birthday attacked him, I realized he wasn't safe with me. So... I took it upon myself to wipe his memories of us ever being together and sent him away. It was my own mistake that led him to get those memories back, and that was the end of our relationship."

"Do you wish things were different?"

Light pursed his lips together as he thought about that answer before shaking his head. "No. Well, yes. I wish I had asked him first. But about us breaking up? I don't regret it. He's a great guy, and I'm happy he's in my life, but..." he sighed, looking down as well, his expression somber. "He wants a stable life. He deserves a stable life, but he can't have that with me. So if I am going to be with someone, it has to be someone who knows the risks of a life with me and *wants* that."

...was he talking about L? L didn't know if Light was or if he was making an unfounded assumption, but he looked away as he felt his cheeks heating up. It would be undignified to let Light see such a thing.

However, it seemed despite L's efforts, Light did see that, and he chuckled. "How about you? What are you looking for in a partner?"

L never thought about that before. What was he looking for in a partner? "Well..." how was he supposed to say this without sounding super weird? Or weirder than usual. "I need someone who can match my intelligence. I would hate to have a boring partner," Light laughed at that. He understood that perfectly. "Hm... I want someone who keeps me on my toes. And, of course, that person would need to be willing to run the risk of being my partner, which would include a life of secrecy and moving around."

"Man or woman?"

L was taken aback by the question. "I never thought about that. I don't see anything wrong with either." He cocked his head to the side, thumb at his lips. "I presume men for you."

Light nodded. "Yeah," he looked up at the night sky, smiling fondly. "Whoever you end up with will be lucky. We should try playing tennis again sometime."

"We should."

"Hey, L?" L looked over, finding Light was looking at him. His smile was hopeful, his eyes shining. "Thank you for accepting my secret."

"Of course," he said. "I won't even tell Watari. All Watari must know is what he already does for the sake of helping Aizawa-San."

"Thank you," Light checked his watch. "Oh, speaking of which, we should probably head back before Aizawa starts wondering where we are."

"Right," L pocketed his trash, keeping the flower in his hands as he became acutely aware of everywhere Light touched him to pick him up again to travel through the night sky before placing L back onto his balcony with the utmost care. L noticed how he didn't care about being seen. Did the cloak prevent the world from seeing him?

"I had fun tonight, L," Light said. "I will handle Beyond Birthday, and you can focus on catching Kira. Okay?"

So that was Light's plan. L smiled, nodding, "I believe that is a reasonable arrangement for maximum efficiency, Light-Kun."

Light noticed that L was still holding onto the flower he had given, no doubt as some kind of test. He said nothing on the matter, waving goodbye, "See you tomorrow!" before taking off through the sky, likely to return home to his sister.

L watched Light leave, his smile refusing to leave his face as he thought about everything he had learned. Light Yagami... a child raised by Shinigami. Even with the answer he so desperately craved for many years, he found his fascination with this young man proved to be even more than he could have ever imagined.

"I can't believe my hunch was right."

L froze when he heard the voice behind him. His lungs forgot how to

breathe for a long moment before forcing himself to let out the breath he had been holding.

"I wouldn't have thought you would come here, B."

Beyond Birthday revealed himself from the shadows of an otherwise pitch black room, where it was evident he had waited for L's arrival. L's only solace was he could be sure nobody was harmed. B wasn't the type to leave that as a surprise if he had. It was far more likely nobody was here.

It was just him, and it was just B.

Beyond Birthday smiled, though it held no delight when contrasting dead eyes. "How could I resist, Lawlipop? I had to see it for myself, and it looks like I was right," he circled around L like a predator surveying his prey. He especially took an interest in L's eyes. "Something is different, L. This isn't like it was before. This goes beyond just a fascination for him, doesn't it? You've actually fallen in love with him."

*Fallen in love with...* L flinched at Beyond's words, though he couldn't help but notice there was no anger in his voice. None at all. It was almost as though... he had accepted it. "What does that matter to you?"

Beyond's features were completely blank, only answering with a small nod for a long moment. "Nothing much, really. But I can't help but be curious," he stopped pacing, coming to lean against the balcony railing, with his back to the rest of the world. "What is it about him? What is it about Light Yagami that means even your equals—hell, even Kira—don't stand a chance of catching your eye the way he does? We have the same powers, but no matter what happens, it's always him. Why?"

He wanted to answer that. Maybe everything would be different if he did have an answer to that. But the truth was... "I don't know." He looked down at the flower in his hand, "All I can say is my sentiments towards him now are a very recent development. But as to why I have been fascinated with him from the start, I can't even begin to say. For all I know, it was fate if either you or I believed in such a thing." He finally looked up to face Beyond, his greatest mistake. "But I will be the first to admit that my intrigue pushed you away. If that is the reason you have gone this far, then I guess the blame would fall on me for what you have become. And for that, I am sorry."

Beyond Birthday recoiled as though he had been burned, slowly backing away from L. "You're a liar. You don't mean that."

"What reason do I have to lie about such a thing?" L asked. It was a simple enough question. "An apology won't change anything. It will not undo what either of us has done. By all accounts, I have nothing to gain from such a thing."

They both knew his words now were not entirely true. In an ideal world, an apology would be all B ever wanted. But this was not that world, and neither was going to pretend it was. They were on their paths, and there was no other point in this than to clear up something that should have been explained long ago.

Beyond Birthday shook his head fervently. "No. You're lying," and then he was gone, leaving L standing alone on his balcony to look out at the world, heaving a sigh as his hair fell into his face.

"No, Ryusei... you'll find I'm not."

...

L was lying. He had to be lying. Why the hell would he even try to say —

He didn't know where he was anymore besides being in a random forest. All he knew was that he had to get as far away from L as possible, stumbling to his knees through a haphazard landing as he clutched onto his head. Did he know L was lying? Did he want L to be lying? What? This was what he wanted, right? But L was never supposed to actually do it! Wouldn't he have abolished the successor program if he was really sorry? The horrors his so-called father figure forced on those children were the real thing he never looked at, so busy wondering about Light Yagami that he didn't care about anything else!

But if L was apologizing so easily... did that mean things could have been different? If he had gone up to L and demanded he pay attention, not letting him blow him off, could things have been different? Could Anthony still be alive? Could those kids have been freed? Could...

What was he thinking? Nothing would have changed. It took

kidnapping Light Yagami to get L's attention! Why would he possibly care unless it somehow related to Light Yagami?

But that was it then, wasn't it? There was no point to any of this. There was no point in kidnapping or killing these people. There was no point in any of it beyond senseless crimes to get the attention of someone who ultimately didn't care. He did all of this... hurt so many people.... for nothing. Nothing at all.

What even was the point of it? Everything happening now wasn't even how he did things, was it? These wings, these eyes, everything that humanity would kill for, but none of it meant a thing. His whole life, nothing meant a thing. People lived, people died, and in the end, all he was meant to be was a...

"Backup."

B's blood ran cold at the sound of the Shinigami King standing before him, though not physically. No, the King would never step down into the human realm. But even without his physical presence, B could still see him as a shadow from the trees. Hear him like a voice in his head. Feel him as prickles on the back of his neck.

"All your life, that is all you have been," the King mused, reminding B to shield his mind from those who could easily get inside. "A backup." B refused to meet where he could tell those eyes were boring into him. "Do you really think L views you as anything except that? If something happens to Light Yagami, he will no doubt go running to you. If he dies, you would be the one to replace him if something happens to Nate River."

Nate... B strengthened the shields over his mind. He knew it was a futile effort, but he couldn't let the King see Nate. He couldn't let him see those memories of that young boy. All the King could believe Nate was to him was another successor trapped within Wammy's House.

If the King knew or cared about Nate, he said nothing on the matter. "There is no need to cry over L Lawliet's words to you," B harshly wiped away his tears at the realization he had been crying. "Get up. It is almost time for you to see once and for all whether you or Light Yagami are better."

"Soon," B scoffed. It didn't even matter what the King did to him for talking back. "It might be soon for you, but Tanabata's in three months. For humans, that's kinda a while."

The King narrowed his eyes, and even if B wanted to speak, he realized he couldn't. He made sure not to react to this, letting the King speak. "Which will give you plenty of time to investigate and complete my task for you. I need you to break that Kira task force apart. It would be... irksome for them to try interferring. Utilize a common link to weaken them, and make sure to lure Light Yagami to where he must be by Tanabata."

So the plans were being set in motion. Was the King ever going to tell him exactly what this was about, or was he going to be left to find out when the day came? Break the task force apart utilizing a common link... he opened his mouth and found he could speak again. "And do you know what that common link would be?"

The King nodded, which made it obvious he wasn't going to tell B what it was. "It is your task to learn for yourself what that link is and exploit it. Do you understand?"

What would happen if he refused? B thought about that task force. They seemed... they seemed happy. He remembered the grief of Light Yagami's creation, that pain in his eyes that day after he killed one of the task force members. It was the same look as when Anthony died. Did he really want to...

He didn't have a choice, did he? There was no point in wondering about what-ifs. He bowed obediently, his voice perfectly monotone as he kept his eyes low...

"Your wish is my command."

# Chapter 41

"Thanks for the help, Han," Misa said while destroying the last of any evidence of her supplies in making the tape for her announcement to the world about her new reforms. The last thing she wanted was to accidentally leave anything that could be used as physical evidence against her.

Hana shrugged as she took off her gloves once they were done with the work. "It's no problem. But I take it if you're doing this and still attending Todai, that whole befriending the experiment thing went well."

Misa nodded, tying her hair back into the wig she used for her identity as Tachibana, the name she joined the university under. She had been able to explain the reason behind this choice to her manager easily, that she wanted education without being swarmed by the paparazzi. Her manager was fine with it, especially given she could skip most days as it was. But today was the entrance ceremony, which meant she would meet Light there.

True to his word, Light met with her weekly to discuss their plans on catching and taking out Beyond Birthday. It didn't escape her notice how excited discussing the matter of justice made him, as though the topic was a fond memory from his childhood that he was eager to share with others. If she was honest with herself, it was pretty cute... If Light wasn't obviously not attracted to women, she might have considered something more with him. But as it stood, the closest she would get was half-allies that could be called something close to friends. Positive acquaintances?

"Alright," Misa stood up, spinning around to show off her outfit for the entrance ceremony, a simple button-up, and a skirt. "How do I look?"

Hana put her pencil to her lips as she looked Misa up and down, nodding to herself as she decided on her choice of words. "Not at all like yourself, so it's perfect for a disguise." She leaned forward, "So, any progress with that Beyond Birthday bastard?"

Misa shook her head bitterly. "Not yet. Light's still trying to figure out how to locate someone by utilizing our power without any ties to Beyond," it would be much easier if he had some means of something Beyond owned to locate him. However, as it stood, nothing like that was in the cards, meaning they would need to improvise.

She looked over at the clock, eyes widening as she realized what time it was. "I have to go! Thanks again, Han!"

Hana waved after her. "Have fun!"

The university wasn't far from her apartment, so she had no trouble arriving on time at a brisk walking pace, though she had to make a conscious effort to hide how out of breath she was by the time she arrived at the front of the main room to get a seat next to Light. "I lost track of time," she said simply, hoping to explain her absence before Light thought anything of it.

But thankfully, Light didn't seem to care, which meant he wasn't judging her. "Don't worry. I was almost late as well," he looked down at his suit, and Misa realized he looked more traditionally put-together than she had ever seen him. Looking at him now, his features looked the same as every time she saw him, but at the same time, it was almost impossible to place him as the same young man who picked up a corpse and confronted Kira and Beyond Birthday without a care in the world.

"At least we don't have to wait," Misa mused, looking at the stage where it seemed the orientation was about to begin. Light chuckled to himself, nodding along with her words.

"Waiting is the worst." He gestured to where the presentation was about to start before closing his eyes, letting himself wander into his own thoughts to pass the time through a presentation he couldn't care less about. *Lucky,* Misa thought bitterly. No matter how hard she tried, it was hard to entertain herself with her own thoughts! And he could just do it easily?!

And Light managed to space out until the final ten minutes of the orientation, where the speaker announced, "Next, we have the freshman address. Our freshman representative, Light Yagami."

Light snapped out of his trace as though he had never been in one, standing up with perfect composure. "Here."

"Freshman representative?" Misa asked quietly. She knew he was a genius, given how early he graduated high school, but wow! "That's impressive."

Light rolled his eyes, keeping his voice low. "Honestly, I forgot until last night that I was doing this. I was supposed to be making it with someone else, but he decided there was no reason to bother. So here I

am," with that, he walked onto the stage, leaving Misa to process what she had just heard.

*Seriously? Who would...* Misa's eyes widened as she realized the implications of what Light had just told her. *L! He must have been at the entrance exams. If he wanted to get close to Light, it would be smart to attend the same university as him. That's what I did.*

Misa only half-heard Light's speech, focusing instead on his eyes and body language as he spoke, with an air of confidence unexpected of someone who so desperately tried to avoid interaction with his age group. From what she heard, the speech got the message across while subtly establishing his personality, but she noticed his eyes and how glazed over he looked. She giggled despite herself. He didn't even care about this, did he?

She had to comment on it. As Light sat back in his seat, she whispered to him, "For someone who clearly hates it, you're good at public speaking."

"I'd have to be, given I want to go into politics," Light replied, looking up at the ceiling to count the tiles to ease his boredom. "The things I do for a better world," he looked over at her. "Are we going for coffee after this, or do we both have other things to do?"

Even if she was safe in the knowledge he was her half-ally, it would only be beneficial if she could manage to befriend him as well. "I'm up for coffee."

It was difficult to have anything close to a real conversation during the final five minutes of the ceremony that was incredibly boring for both of them, so it was to their immense mutual relief when it was over, and they had the freedom to leave.

They were the first to escape the orientation, surprised to find Yamamoto leaning on one of the pillars while waiting for both of them, flipping a coin over and over to practice his hand-eye coordination.

He brightened at the sight of them, waving for them to come over to him. "Hey, Light! Hey, Amane."

Misa froze, "You know?"

"I guessed it pretty easily when we first met up," Yamamoto said, shrugging as though it was no big deal that he could easily guess such

a thing. "Hana just confirmed it when I asked if my hunch was right. So," he looked over at Light, nudging him playfully, "How was the entrance ceremony, Freshman Representative?"

Light smiled, more than aware Yamamoto was teasing him, and the three of them began walking down the street and away from everyone else. "Boring, as you would expect." He cocked his head as he looked toward Yamamoto. "I thought you were going back home for your own entrance ceremony."

"Eh, why bother?" Yamamoto said. "I have more important matters on my hands." Like what? Was he involved in the Beyond Birthday case too? Now that Misa thought about it, how much did Yamamoto know? "I think Aizawa's got his whole situation under control."

"I'm glad," Light said, and it caught Misa's attention how vague he was about that, but it gave Misa a valuable piece of information. She knew the basics of the Aizawa situation, though not many details, but it seemed Yamamoto didn't know she knew, and he had far more information than she did. "So I take it you're going to be going back to practice after stopping for coffee?"

"Naturally," Yamamoto said casually before turning serious, sticking his hand in his pocket. "And I wanted to check on you to make sure you were alright. We both know how you feel about large crowds," he looked around curiously. "Is Ryuzaki not here?"

Light shook his head. "He had better things to do."

Misa huffed, not caring how undignified it looked, as she crossed her arms. "Is that just a thing with you geniuses? You get a title that most students would kill for, and you decide you have better things to do?"

"Yeah, basically," Light replied. "I would have skipped too if Mother didn't insist I at least go to the entrance ceremony, even if I skip most of college." He brightened as an idea came to mind. "I know a good place we can stop for coffee if you want."

Now that she could understand. Misa grinned, grabbing both Light and Yamamoto by their arms. "Coffee on me!"

OoOoO

Sitting in the center of the testing facility, Aizawa tried to will himself to remember. The door was locked behind him, leaving him sitting alone in a silence that may have been bliss if he had any luck in his current goal. But as it was, even after sitting in attempted meditation for what may have been minutes or hours, no success came in his intended goal.

He wasn't even annoyed when he heard the sound of the elevator as Yamamoto came inside. This was the one area within task force headquarters he had the unrestricted authority to enter because of Watari's desire to collect any data he could on Aizawa's condition, which was easier when he had the footage of his and Yamamoto's training.

Yamamoto noticed what he was doing. "You're thinking about it again, aren't you?"

Aizawa gave a curt nod but didn't turn to face Yamamoto just yet. "Yeah."

He almost had his fight or flight completely under control. After what felt like far too long training, he could finally look at images of Eriko simultaneously with the automated attacks and manage to keep his head. But it wasn't enough. He could still feel it.

"I scheduled a time to see Eriko tonight."

Yamamoto blinked, but there was no surprise in his reaction. "I was wondering when you would do that. I'm guessing you can't move on from things until you know what happened?"

He was right, but Aizawa wasn't going to say it. There was no point in going into what was already common knowledge. He stood up and brushed down his jumpsuit. "Come on, let's get a bit more training before I do this. Is your back doing alright?"

Yamamoto nodded, removing his button-up to change into his workout attire, revealing the long scar along his back. "I'm fine," he assured him. "It's healed much faster now that I'm on my feet training with an actual opponent every day. Now," he picked up his sword from where it lay on the table, stepping inside the main testing room as he pointed the weapon at Aizawa. "Shall we begin?"

It was routine by this point. Even when Yamamoto managed to take on an entirely different fighting style, Aizawa could match him blow for blow like it was second nature. And though the point of the

exercise was to master these abilities and maintain a level head, the secondary purpose was for Yamamoto to be able to match someone with the same physical capabilities as Beyond Birthday. And in that, it didn't take him long to excel until even his enhancements left them relatively evenly matched.

*I can do this.* Aizawa closed his eyes, side-stepping another blow from Yamamoto, daring to bring Eriko to mind. How would she attack...

He felt his muscles tense and adrenaline course through his veins, noticing that he was moving faster now, flipping over Yamamoto with ease and ducking under the sword to kick his legs out from under him, but for a terrifying moment, he wasn't consciously doing any of it. *I can't go into autopilot... I can't lose myself... Focus. Focus. My name is Shuichi Aizawa.*

He took a deep breath, willing himself to slow down. Willing whatever remained of his humanity to keep his mind and remember who he was. *I'm safe. This is just training. I'm safe.*

As silly as the reassurance was, thinking of the family he had now... of Ide, the kids, and even the task force... *My name is Shuichi Aizawa. And I will keep my mind intact.*

And he did. He snapped back to reality, conscious control of his body returning to him as he dodged another blow. Yamamoto also noticed the return to self, asking with his eyes if Aizawa was alright to continue, to which he gave the nod. There was no way he would stop now when he succeeded at what he set out to do!

Even on autopilot, he still had enough of his mind not to behave like a wounded animal. He still remembered it. Finally...

The match ended when the timer rang out the end, finishing in a draw, but neither cared about who won or lost. Aizawa nodded to himself, finding he could so easily stop fighting, looking down at his hands. His hands were shaking, but... "I'm still myself."

Yamamoto grinned, wiping the sweat from his brow while Aizawa surveyed him to make sure he wasn't hiding any of his own pain. Thankfully, it seemed that outside of that being exhausting, Yamamoto had no current strain from his injury. "Should I tell Matsuda the therapy was actually good for something?"

"Don't you dare." Aizawa looked over at the clock on the far wall, hesitating when he noticed the time. He had to be at the detention

center within an hour, and he had to do it as though he was a normal person. As easy as it would be to be there in the blink of an eye, the last thing he wanted was that be picked up by a security camera. Though he did use his speed to change out of his jumpsuit and into a work suit. "I'll see you tomorrow?"

"Let me know how it goes," Yamamoto called after him, watching as Aizawa took the elevator into the parking garage.

Aizawa smiled as he saw Ide waiting for him, holding out the car keys he would no doubt need. "Thanks for not stopping me."

"If you think this is going to help you, I would never prevent that," Ide said, "I may not like Eriko or even tolerate her, but whether I like it or not, she has the answers you need. I know you can take care of yourself." But Ide didn't need to say anything for Aizawa to know that no matter how confident he was in Aizawa's capabilities, this situation was one he would always worry about.

"If it helps, the Chief will be there as well," he said, squeezing Ide's hand reassuringly. Ide had wanted to go with him, but as much as Aizawa wanted to have his partner by his side, that felt too petty for what he needed to do. And Ide respected that, even if he wasn't fond of it. "Someone needs to be watching who knows about..." he gestured to his eyes.

Ide nodded. If it couldn't be him, Soichiro was the next best option. "I know," he placed his hand on Aizawa's shoulder. "You've got this. Remember that."

At least one of them thought that. "Thank you." He smiled and squeezed Ide's hand again before stepping into the car. "I'll be back in a few hours. Have fun reading another terrible book with Yumi." That at least got a smile out of Ide to ease his concerns, and Aizawa got himself on the road.

Detention Center... he still couldn't believe that was where he was going. He knew it made sense logically, given the case had been announced guilty of assaulting a police officer. But still... even the idea of it was unbelievable. Even her attempted defense, claiming it was self-defense against him, hadn't worked, largely due to how he was found half-dead, and she was found unscathed.

He had to take a moment to collect himself as he parked the car once he finally arrived, grateful to have driven out early. He underestimated how long it would take to get here. *Maybe it would*

*have been easier to run. At the very least, I wouldn't have had to deal with the road construction. Light's got the right idea with flying everywhere.*

As amusing as the memories of Light's "flying" as a baby was, he knew he needed to get out of the car eventually. It would be a bad look if he was late for the meeting he specifically requested.

Soichiro was waiting for him when he got out of the car. Aizawa managed to offer a respectful nod despite his nerves. "Hey, Chief."

"Are you alright?" Was the first thing out of Soichiro's mouth, both a question of Aizawa's wellbeing and asking him if he was ready for this. Soichiro wouldn't judge him if he needed to leave and would be able to handle him if anything happened. Not that anything would happen, he was ready for this, but it was reassuring to have a backup plan.

"Yeah." He nodded briskly. "Just nerves. Don't worry about me. I know I'm not going to flip out or anything."

"I wasn't asking about that," Soichiro said. "This is the first time you're speaking to her since the incident, am I right?"

He was right. Aizawa had *seen* Eriko during the criminal and the divorce trial, though he made sure Yumi was involved in neither. But even then, that was months ago and was the last time he had seen her without speaking to her. Even when Nozomu was born, she was back in the detention center by the time he saw the baby.

Soichiro placed his hand on Aizawa's shoulder, making sure his movements were exaggerated, so Aizawa had plenty of time to refuse to contact. "It takes a lot of courage to face someone who hurt you. I'll be there the whole time." Aizawa nodded, looking towards the door where he knew Eriko would be waiting for him. "Remember. Keep your voice steady."

"I know." He opened the door, his breath catching in his throat as he saw Eriko waiting for him on the other side of the glass. Even behind bars, she looked the same as she always did. He had to consciously stop himself from freezing, memories flashing behind his eyes at what happened every time she looked at him with the resentment she did now.

*Things are different now... I'm safe...*

He stepped over to the glass without a word, taking a seat before

facing her. He didn't often notice the change in his vision since the change, but it was never more apparent than as he was surveying her face to see what she was thinking. She noticed the change in how he was carrying himself and in his eyes that he didn't plan to hide, but she wasn't saying anything.

"I didn't add you to my list of family."

He would have been shocked if she did. "I know." *Let on no sign of fear.* He kept his voice firm, just as Soichiro said. "Look. I don't want to be here anymore than you want me to be here, so let's keep it brief for both our sakes."

"What's his name?"

Aizawa's brow furrowed. "What?"

"Our son." He could hear the annoyance seeping into her tone. A warning, though he did notice something else. "Don't tell me I lost the right to know my own son's name."

She was trying to take control of the conversation. He wanted to look back to Soichiro to ask if he should answer this, but he knew he had to do this alone. Soichiro was here, so nobody else was, in case something happened. He had to trust his judgment, and though he didn't want to humor her, he knew she had a right to know. "Nozomu. His name is Nozomu."

"You named him hope," Eriko chuckled bitterly to herself. "Of course you did." But her bitterness turned to sorrow. "Do you really hate me that much, Shuichi? I don't think anyone deserves their husband to be so happy they're behind bars that they name their son after hope."

That wasn't actually the reason, but he could hear Ide's petty laughter at Eriko's interpretation. But enough of that. She knew Nozomu's name now. It was time to get back to the real topic. "He isn't the reason I came here."

"Then what was the reason?" Eriko asked, keeping her tone just as even as he was, noticeably straightening in her seat. "I'm willing to forgive you for what you did, but I've believed you hated me, given you have refused to see me until now."

"What I did?" He remembered the trial just as well as she did, so he already knew this would be a horribly distorted version of reality, but if he heard a more realistic account of what happened, would hearing

her say what happened reignite his memories? Light had confirmed the memory was there, but it was blocked by injury or trauma. But he had to know, no matter how painful the memory was. "I came to ask you about that. I heard what you said in the trial, but we both heard it get disproved as a lie. What really happened that day?"

Eriko rolled her eyes ever so slightly. "Your memory has always been terrible." And she was back to insulting his memory for not remembering perceived slights she loved to bring up in arguments. Great. If there was one good thing about suffering a brain hemorrhage he only ambiguously made it out alive from, it was that he had a reason for any memory problem he may have. "Why do you want to know? I would have thought you would want to forget all about that."

And wouldn't that be nice? But alas, life wasn't going to be that kind. "I'm afraid it's harder to move on from that than I thought."

Eriko's mouth twitched as she found something to focus on. "Does that have something to do with your questionable choice of contacts?"

*Oh lord. Here we go.* "This isn't contacts," he said, "My eyes have been like this ever since I woke up from the coma."

She almost scoffed at his answer. "Do you honestly expect me to believe that?"

He prepared for her to say that, but should he... He looked back at Soichiro, waiting for him to give the nod, allowing Aizawa to pull out the small knife he packed for such an occasion. "Here. I'll show you."

He pulled back his sleeve to expose his forearm, making sure she was watching as he stabbed the blade into his arm.

Eriko's eyes were as wide as saucers. She almost jumped up in alarm. "Shuichi?!"

The knife snapped in half in its failed attempt to break his skin. There wasn't even a mark where the knife had been. He never wanted to do things this way, but he knew the cameras were disabled, and there was no way she would listen if she didn't understand why he was asking. If he didn't prove it to her no matter what, she would take that and use it as a means of control for the entire conversation to question his sanity.

Slowly, he looked back up to face her, and he could tell she was really looking at him now. "Is that the proof you need?" He asked. "That

night was my last night as a normal person, and I need to know why. I know how I ended up this way, but I don't know why I was on the brink of death in the first place."

Eriko was still looking at him with wide eyes, and while she made no move to back away, he could see the sudden spike of fear in her eyes that somehow made him even more uncomfortable than when he was the one at her mercy. Moments ago, she may have tried to bargain benefits in exchange for this information, but she was no longer looking at him like he was a person, let alone her ex-husband. She was looking at him like he was a monster. He had known this would happen... but if making himself seem monstrous meant he got the answers he needed, then so be it.

"Do you really want to know?" Eriko asked, her eyes leaving his arm to meet his own eyes. "You won't like the truth."

"I know. But I need to know." He wasn't going to beg, even if he could tell part of her still expected him to. He maintained unblinking eye contact with her until she regained her confidence, watching the gears turn in her head as she determined how to phrase her words to regain control of him.

"You lost your mind. That's what happened."

And as she said that, Aizawa remembered.

*He caught her wrist as she tried to hit him.*

*It was a fight like any other, stemming back to Eriko's detest of his chosen work path. They had this argument many times, but this time was different. This had been on his mind ever since he heard Light and Ide talking in the hall earlier that day, and it made the reality of his situation truly sink in. And somehow, that was enough for muscle memory to activate, and he caught her hand, saying the thing he wanted to for so many years.*

*"I'm done, Eriko," he seethed, quickly letting go of her hand and stepping out of her reach. "I've had enough of this."*

*He stormed past her and out of the room before it could lead to another three hour fight that left him feeling as though he was insane. He didn't care to pack any bags as he hurried to get to Yumi. Take Yumi and leave. Consequences be damned. He could figure it out later. He just had to get out of here.*

*He could hear Eriko chasing after him. "Have you lost your mind?!" She*

*shouted. "Don't walk away from me!" She managed to grab ahold of his wrist just as he was about to go down the stairs, squeezing painfully. Aizawa spun around to face her, trying to pull back while maintaining his balance. He couldn't stop himself from wincing in pain as her nails dug into his arm.*

*"Let go of me!" There was fear in his voice. He wasn't going to deny that. But that wasn't the thing that made Eriko recoil as though she had been burned. It was the hatred in his eyes.*

*He saw the shock in her eyes, which immediately diffused his anger. His eyes widened as he realized with horror what he had done. What was he thinking?! About to ruin everything on a whim? He dealt with worse! Why was it getting to him now?*

*"Hey..." he took a step towards her, hoping it wasn't too late to apologize. "I'm sorry, okay? I wasn't in my right mind, but that isn't an excuse. I'm not leaving."*

*Eriko refused to look at him, hugging herself until he got close. She harshly pushed him away, and Aizawa yelped as he lost his footing, feeling his body tumbling down the stairs just behind him as the world almost went in slow motion. He could see Eriko's realization of what she had done, panic on her face.*

*He gasped as he felt the sharp pain in his skull, the back of his head harshly landing on the corner of the steps. And for a moment, he lay sprawled at the bottom of the stairs, unable to move at all.*

*"Shuichi!" Eriko was already running down the stairs, holding him in her arms as she helped him slowly sit up. "Shuichi, darling, talk to me!"*

*It took a long moment, but Aizawa slowly managed to get his bearings enough that he could move his body. "Huh? I'm fine," he clutched his head, still pounding from what just happened. But that wasn't the only thing... His head was spinning a lot...*

*Eriko had her arms around him protectively, trying to keep herself calm. Even when his head was spinning, he knew this was different than other times she had hit him. This could have been fatal. "You're badly shaken up. Come on," she helped him stand, letting him lean on her for support. "Are you in pain? I can ask Yumi to bring you dinner upstairs if you want to rest?"*

*He shook his head. He just needed a moment for his head to stop spinning, and he would be fine. "No... I'm fine." Maybe this would mean they could*

*have peace for a while...*

*He let Eriko guide him into the kitchen for dinner, steadying him as he walked since his vision continued to spin.*

*And the rest was history.*

Aizawa gasped as he snapped back to reality, quickly looking around to make sure nothing had happened. It must have only been a few seconds, even if it felt much longer. The only indication anything happened was the metal table had bent ever so slightly under his strength. He could feel himself shaking, but he managed to prevent anything else from happening.

"Thank you, Eriko," he smiled genuinely. "I mean it. I needed those answers." He stood up from his chair, turning to face the door and Soichiro. "Am I right to assume we both hope to never see each other again?"

Eriko was completely taken aback, though whether from the change in demeanor or from how he didn't fold upon hearing her version of events was something he didn't know nor care enough to find out. "Yes."

He nodded. That worked. "Well then, goodbye, Eriko." He made sure to keep his pace steady as he headed out the door with Soichiro by his side. He waited until the door was closed to lean against the wall, looking down at his shaking hands as he tried to wrap his head around what he had just remembered. "Oh my god..."

"Aizawa, are you alright?" Soichiro asked worriedly.

"Yeah..." Aizawa nodded to himself, his voice soft in a mix of relief, disappointment, and sheer disbelief. "I remember... I finally remember what happened." He ran his hand through his hair, laughing to himself. "Even for a moment, I was capable of standing up to her... Thank god..."

He was shocked as Soichiro pulled him into a loving embrace. "You looked like you needed this," he said. "I'm proud of you. It takes a lot of courage to face her like that."

*"I'm proud of you."* Words he so rarely heard in his life. That was the thing that made him come undone, his breathing shaky as he buried his head in Soichiro's shoulder, daring to let himself melt into the embrace. "Thank you."

He didn't know how to describe how he was feeling, almost as though a demon he hadn't known remained slowly lifted away from him and disappeared. Finally, the last question he had, the thing that left him returning to this and unable to truly move on, was answered.

He knew he would never forget what happened. But for the first time in so many years... he truly felt peace of mind.

# Chapter 42

The world looked different through the eyes of someone who had seen the full extent of Light's secret. L had not noticed it before, but nothing made that more apparent than every time he came in contact with the Kira task force, and everything he had not seen before was now impossible to miss.

The most obvious change was the ability to see the Shinigami that Light referred to as his Mom, and most notably, what came with that was something about Matsuda he had never noticed before, that Matsuda would toss apples into the air and make a game of being able to eat them before L noticed. It was something so easy to ignore when more focused on Light, but with the Shinigami in his life, he couldn't help but be amused by the antics.

He was forced to snap out of his musings with the exasperated shout of "Why does my file read Schrödinger's cat?!" from Aizawa.

Matsuda looked up from his computer, where he had been investigating potential leads, answering the question as though the answer was obvious. "Because we don't know if you're alive or dead."

Aizawa opened his mouth to say something, then closed it as he realized Matsuda had a point. "Just because you're right doesn't mean you're interesting."

Immediately, L picked up on something different in Aizawa's tone as he said that. Where there would normally be frustration, it seemed the underlying stress that had for years taken over his very being had faded, not completely, but enough that he was actually managing to laugh about the situation.

The sound of the door opening had L looking up immediately. He smiled when he saw Light come through the door, and with his arrival came the true difference in the sight. Though Light was always beautiful, seeing the person he truly was made him almost more radiant than before, with a sparkle in his eyes that had not been there before.

Soichiro relaxed noticeably upon seeing his son was back safe. "How was school, Light? I noticed Ryuk came back early, and I was worried."

"I told you, it's nothing like that," Ryuk said, swiping the apple from Matsuda when he wasn't looking. "But his physics teacher was so boring I had to do something to not die from it!"

Light nodded, shrugging his bag off his shoulder and placing it next to his chair. "Yeah, school was great except for physics. The physics teacher, Dr. Yoneda, continues to be terrible."

Ide's expression was that of abstract horror and complete exasperation. "I pity you. You got Dr. Yoneda?!"

Aizawa looked up from where he had set his own file down and was focusing on the investigation. He recognized that name. "Wait, isn't that the name of the guy who..."

"Is the best and the worst thing that happened to me and Yumi's bad food and worse book ritual?" Ide said, "Yeah. Yeah, it's that guy."

Matsuda offered a sunny smile. "You should get him to sign your copies."

Ide raised an eyebrow. "You realize Yumi and I write sarcastic commentary in those books, right?"

And suddenly, Matsuda's sunny smile turned mischievous. "I know." He leaned back in his seat. "You know, Ide, if you're looking for terrible books, I can always lend you the *Twilight* novels. I can even get you the movies when those start coming out."

Ide rolled his eyes while Aizawa cringed at the idea of his daughter reading that. "Matsuda, I'm trying to be a *good* step-parent."

Matsuda sent Ide a knowing look, and while it took Ide a long moment to realize what Matsuda was indirectly saying, Aizawa caught on immediately. "What have I done to you to deserve this?"

Soichiro chuckled. "Shouldn't we be focusing on the Kira case?"

"Oh, right," Matsuda rubbed the back of his neck sheepishly. "Sorry, Chief." He looked over towards Light. "Are you still going to be focusing on Beyond Birthday?"

Light nodded, "Yeah. I've gotten closer in my experiments to find a way to locate him, but I haven't perfected it yet." His shoulders slumped. "I need to find him fast, but the last time I saw him was nowhere closeby."

L had to consciously stop himself from letting anything on. So it seemed Light did not know B had been here. He thought back on what B had said, words that he could not shake from his memory even when he tried. What would have happened if things had been different? He knew it was foolish to think about what he wished he had done differently, as all it would do was bring him pain. Nevertheless, it was harder than he could have imagined to ignore.

He felt Light place a hand on his shoulder, asking with his eyes if they were still on for their plans tonight. L nodded enthusiastically before sitting in his usual crouch, taking a bite of his cake as he examined the changes in Kira's MO recently.

"Now then, we have a lot to accomplish today."

This seemed to be how most days played out for the last few weeks, investigating various leads into Kira's identity. The current fixation was on the tapes to see if they could pinpoint any physical evidence that could be used against Kira. Though L knew that it was unlikely they would find anything, it was worth investigating.

Tonight's plan proved remarkably interesting, as Matsuda's investigation and utilization of his social talents led to the discovery of underground Kira support meetings and their locations. It was unlikely they would find Kira at these meetings, though Aizawa would be attending to see if he could sense anything abnormal.

Soon, they would be able to catch Kira and determine the source of Kira's power, but L found that was by no means the thing that entertained him most in a given day. The thing that fascinated him the most was Light Yagami and his own desire to learn that matched L's own.

"I've got a stopwatch," Light held up the watch in question, waving goodbye to his less hesitant father and spreading his wings wide. "I have texted how quickly I can travel around the world, but I never considered timing between locations to test if my technical speed changes."

"I do not believe so if we take your altered sense of time into account," L mused. "But it is worth testing." He stepped over, allowing Light to wrap his arms around him. He did what he could not to think of how he was acutely aware of everywhere Light was touching or how his own hand moved to grip onto Light's arm as he took off into the sky without any effort.

He knew that flight happened in only a fraction of a second, but to L, it felt as though he had all the time in the world as Light showed him just how he saw the world, looking at it all down below and seeing the beauty L never thought of before.

If this was how Light saw the world, L found he could understand why Light kept his secret so close to his chest. Though, to his understanding, he had loosened his hold on it as he got older... was there a reason for that? Was he able to lose these capabilities once, but that was no longer a concern? Or did it come in memory manipulation that he no longer feared revealing his secret?

They landed alone on the prospect point of Niagra Falls, where the sun was an hour away from rising, so they had time before anyone could see them. L looked down in amazement at the waterfall he had only seen in images. Though he had no desire to get any closer, the view was something to behold.

"Smile!" L blinked as he realized there was a flash, and he saw Light on the other end of a camera with a broad grin of his own as he examined the photo he had just taken. "You look more confused than anything else..." he chuckled, "But I suppose that's more fitting for you than a smile."

"Is it wise to take photos, Light-Kun?" L asked, less out of concern and more of genuine curiosity as his thumb moved to his lips. "Kira needs a face to kill."

"And it's not like Kira would be able to get into my photo album," Light said casually. "Don't worry. I won't be printing it until I can be sure your identity is safe. I just have it for me." He gestured out at the water. "I've been taking pictures of all the places I want to travel to, and it looks like you got to join me this time." He leaned against the railing. "You've been vague about what kind of places you would like to see. What do you do when you're not solving cases?"

What did he do? Well... "When I was young, I used to go to amusement parks to try to gain excitement from it, but eventually, I grew bored of variations of the same thing over and over." He smiled fondly. "You are the only thing I have never grown bored of." His eyes widened as he realized what he had just said so thoughtlessly, turning slowly to see Light's own eyes were wide as well.

"I... I'm honored," he had to clear his throat, tugging at his shirt collar slightly. "I can't say I would grow bored of you either."

Light showed him his secret. Should L do the same? He didn't see a reason he shouldn't, and in the weeks since Light revealed himself, he proved himself to be plenty trustworthy.

"Light," he found himself looking into Light's eyes, surveying his expression to see what he was thinking. "I want to show you something."

OoOoO

Rem never cared for the human world, though she was willing to admit the actions of the experiment were more interesting to observe than the months spent gambling with nothing else to do besides wander the barren world.

But when Gelus died, Rem found someone else that caught her attention far more: the girl named Misa Amane, who was dissatisfied with the world she lived in and would do whatever she had to with the Death Note to bring forth a better world. Rem hadn't understood before why Gelus would give his life to save a human he knew from the start would die, but looking at her... who wouldn't cherish a human who wanted to do more than the same routine all humans went through before their deaths.

But it was more than that matter which left Rem both intrigued and concerned by the situation at hand. While Misa was doing something the King no doubt approved of if he didn't put a stop to it, there were no protective measures for Misa in the same way there were for the experiment, Light Yagami.

Light Yagami claimed he would act as a neutral party and not turn Misa in to the police, but that did not mean Misa would be safe. Should Rem go down to accompany her in Gelus's place? But what would she do if she did that? She knew the rules and what would become of her if she aided Misa Amane. Even Ryuk, who utilized loopholes in the rules any chance he had, feared the King's wrath enough to have asked to go as far as he did with turning Light Yagami into a hybrid Shinigami in a similar manner to the boy who called himself Beyond Birthday.

It would not be to defy the King to travel to the human world to accompany Misa, as she had no Shinigami attached to her, but at the

same time, Rem couldn't help but feel a hesitance to do so. The King had been planning something for many years, though no Shinigami and maybe not even Beyond Birthday himself knew what it was.

Perhaps it would be wise to wait until she knew the King's plan. If it proved a danger to Misa, she would have the chance to warn Misa of the threat to her life, even if it meant the cost of Rem's own.

Though she could already hear what the King would say if he knew that love was for mortals and fools, and to consider such a thing would be a waste. Somehow, Rem found she did not care.

# Chapter 43

What L wanted to show him was Wammy's House.

Light had seen the orphanage before, and he knew L suspected it. Still, seeing it from the perspective of this being a place L called home, Light couldn't help but feel as though the orphanage had a completely different feel to it than the aura of death that was overpowering the last time he was here months ago. What was once suffocating now felt welcoming.

L smiled fondly as he looked up at the orphanage, a wistful look in his eyes as he reached his hand out towards the gate. "It's been a long time since I was back here."

"Huh?" Light cocked his head to the side. "Wasn't this where you stayed between cases?" He was surprised to see L shaking his head.

"I don't see the point of doing that. It is easier to stay in locations nearby any investigation I am currently on. The last time I chose to come here for longer than a day was..." he trailed off, but Light knew full well what L meant.

"Before A died?"

L nodded, keeping his head low before he quickly looked up again. "Come along. I didn't bring you here to reminisce about the past. There are some people who would like to meet you, and I figured since we have grown closer since you told me your secret, you wouldn't mind. Don't worry, I haven't told them anything."

He opened the gate to the orphanage, and Light was overwhelmed by the sounds of children running through the courtyard playing with a ball and how it contrasted with the silence inside the building. *Who does L want me to meet?* Light couldn't help but wonder. Some part of him feared this would be a trap, and L had been playing him all along. But he managed to collect his thoughts and deduced that it was his parents' paranoia more than any concerns of his own. L was by no means stupid, and having Light close to a graveyard, where one move of his flute and he could raise an army of the dead, was by no means a risk L would be willing to take.

But that begged the question: who did L want him to meet?

The answer turned out to be something Light wasn't expecting, as L stepped into what seemed to be a play area, where three children remained inside. One was playing video games, one was reading a book and studying with a look of utter frustration, and the third...

That was the boy. The small white-haired boy that knew B! And when the boy looked up at him, he gasped softly. There was no way he had seen Light that day, so why...?

The blonde boy put down his book, beaming as he realized who was standing in the doorway. "L!" his shout got the attention of the boy playing video games as the blonde boy ran over to L and hugged his waist. "You're back!"

Light couldn't help but soften as he saw the love in L's face and body language as he bent down to pull the two boys into an embrace. "Mello, Matt, it's good to see you." He stood up, pulling Light closer to him.

Mello was bouncing on the balls of his feet. "We didn't know you were coming back so soon! Did you catch Kira?"

L shook his head at the question, but Light couldn't help but roll his eyes at the shadow of a cocky side smile at the mention of how fast they arrived. "Boys, there is someone I would like you to meet." He gestured towards Light, "This is Light Yagami. Light-Kun, this is Mello, Matt, and Near."

Light waved as he suddenly felt all eyes on him. "Hello."

Matt lifted his goggles, looking at Light in amazement as he ran over to him. "So he really does have superpowers?!" He ran around Light to look for any indication of such a thing, "Watari's not here, and Roger would have told us if the private jet was going to arrive." His eyes lit up as he noticed the flute attached at Light's belt. "What's this?"

"Hey!" Light quickly snatched the flute back from Matt. "It's just a flute." He looked over to L, noticing him giggling, which made Light relax. L's demeanor was enough to tell him that these kids were harmless, just excited. So he grinned, bending down to Matt's level. "But this is not an ordinary flute. It helps me channel my magic. Want to see?"

"Yes!"

Light looked up to see Ryuk had landed through the window, huffing

from the effort it took to find Light. "You're doing party tricks for kids?"

Well, these weren't normal kids. They meant something to L, so he had to make a good impression, and why not show off a little magic if there was no danger in doing so? It made them happy.

He opened the window, bringing the flute to his lips and thinking of a song to play. While he knew he could make quite the show with the power to animate the dead, that was by no means his intention, so he needed something... softer.

He didn't pick any song in particular. All he did was look towards L and let his body do the rest of the word for him as he slowly closed his eyes, gathering flowers that had fallen upon the ground and bringing them inside in a whirlwind.

As he slowly opened his eyes, he grimaced as he realized the sheer number of flowers he had brought inside, covering the floor and making themselves home in L's hair. He looked rather nice like that, but as the Near sneezed, Light realized that may not have been the best call, moving to quickly move them back into a pile outside.

But Mello and Matt seemed to have other ideas about the whole thing. "That... was... awesome!" They ran over to him, "What else can you do? Can you fly?!"

Light chuckled, ruffling the hair of both boys. "Maybe I can. Who knows," he looked back up to L, seeing he had brushed the flowers out of his hair. He could see the delight and the relief to see Light was getting along with these children he cared for, but just as much as he could see that, he could also see the concern towards the Near, who remained unusually quiet as he focused on a blank puzzle.

"Hey," Light stepped over to Near. "Can you and I talk for a moment?"

"I don't see why," Near said, but he eventually finished his puzzle and stood up. "But alright."

He stepped out into the hall with Light, leading him down the way into a hallway in which he felt strangely at home, the aura of death something he was all too familiar with.

And it seemed Near had realized it as well. "You're like him. Aren't you?"

Light wasn't going to pretend he didn't know what Near was talking about. "Yes. He and I have very similar abilities. Mine just happened differently."

"I know he went to look for you," Near said softly, walking into a room that seemed to be his own, next to the room A had died in. "What happened to him?" He picked up the Wara Ningyo doll from his nightstand. "If anyone would know, it stands to reason it would be you. So what happened? Is he alright?"

Light made sure to keep his features blank as he decided how he should go about this. "Why do you want to know?"

Near eyed him, trying to see what game he was playing. "He used to live in the house, then I hear he was arrested after kidnapping you, then he disappeared without any trace. It's only natural that I would want to know."

*Clever*. This kid wasn't going to say everything. If Light didn't know better than to have seen that emotional attachment he seemed to have towards Beyond Birthday, he might have believed it. He made no move to look into Near's memories, deciding it was none of his business.

"I don't know," he admitted. It wasn't a lie by any means. He had heard nothing from Beyond Birthday since his own birthday. "I have had a few run-ins with him since then, I can't even begin to tell you what he's doing now." He sat down next to Near on the bed. "Is that his doll?"

Near nodded, but any fondness towards the doll was quickly replaced with pain. "Is it true?"

"Is what true?"

"That he killed police officers." He looked up at Light, determined to get an answer. "Is it true that he broke your leg? I've heard rumors, but nothing was confirmed."

It would be easy to tell this kid the truth about what happened and what kind of person B truly was, but... looking at this kid and the desperation that this wasn't the truth... he found he couldn't do it.

He thought back to what Beyond Birthday had said. *"Maybe you were just in the crossfire at one point. But it's too late to go back now. You're in this whether you like it or not."*

"The leg was more my fault," he chose his words carefully, letting Near rest his head on his shoulder. "As for the police officers... that is true, but I don't think he wanted to. There's something going on behind the scenes related to our powers. I don't know what it is, but I know that he is trapped and is having a hard time escaping."

Whether Near caught onto the half-truth or not, he gave no indication of it one way or another, looking down at the doll in his hands. "Is that why he hasn't come back? I think I see him sometimes in the graveyard, but he's always gone when I check."

Light couldn't help but look to Ryuk for an answer to that question. Why would Beyond Birthday be trying to hide from Near? It could be as simple as trying to avoid his old life, so why did Light's gut tell him that wasn't the case?

"I've got no idea," Ryuk said. "I mean, he's clearly got a human heart. Maybe that's got something to do with it."

That would work. "I would say so," he said to Near. "I don't think he would leave you without a reason."

Why was he doing this? Making Beyond Birthday, the bastard who kidnapped him, attacked Yamamoto, and killed Ukita, seem more like a tortured soul than the monster he was? Wouldn't it be more painful to let the kid think that and then be met with the ugly truth?

But the way he saw Near relax, smiling to himself as he looked down at the doll with that fondness returned, he found he didn't regret what he said. "Come on, let's go meet back up with the others."

Near nodded, allowing Light to hold onto his hand and lead him back into the hallway where L had been waiting. Light felt butterflies in his stomach as L got close, feeling L's hot breath against his ear.

"Thank you. He hasn't been the same since B left."

So that was how it was... Light stayed close to L, seeing Near's demeanor had become more hopeful as he sat back down to restart his puzzle.

*This kid loves you, B. Don't break his heart.*

OoOoO

Feeling truly relaxed for the first time in a while, Soichiro was content as he hurried towards his house, checking his watch to see how much time he had. Sayu was at a sleepover with a friend, and with Light spending his time getting closer to L, he and Sachiko were going to have a date night, just like when they first started dating.

Having someone as influential as L, who knew Light's secret and not only accepted it but welcomed it with open arms, was the best thing that had happened for either Soichiro or Sachiko's mental well-being. Soichiro would not lie and say he didn't have lingering doubts about L. Still, the level of acceptance he showed Light made it easier to accept that his fascination with Light was a matter of curiosity and not trying to use him.

While their marriage had long since repaired from the strain that Ryuk's appearance had first brought on them, balancing work and having two kids was quite the task, whether they were normal or supernatural. So they would embrace the time to themselves all they wanted.

He just had to change out of his work clothes and into something nicer. He had twenty minutes, as Sachiko should be waiting for him at the restaurant, to get a reservation before the dinner rush, which would maximize efficiency. If they timed everything correctly, neither of them would have to tolerate traffic.

But as soon as he got to the door, he realized something was wrong. Why was the door unlocked? It wasn't broken, but Sachiko never left the door unlocked...

He moved his hand to the gun at his hip as he stepped inside, looking around the dark house for any sign there was something abnormal.

And that was when he saw it. Soichiro took a cautious step forward as he saw the Wara Ningyo doll sitting on the kitchen table. A chill went up his spine as he gasped. Beyond Birthday—

He spun around, and his heart clenched as he found Beyond Birthday standing behind him, with eyes glowing blood red in the darkness.

Beyond Birthday looked at him, but there was nothing behind his eyes. Almost as though they were dead. "I'm sorry."

That was the last thing Soichiro heard before the world turned to

nothing.

# Chapter 44

Light knew something was wrong the moment he received a call from Mother. Weren't she and Dad supposed to be on a date? And she knew Light was kinda... well, he wasn't on a *date,* but he supposed what he was doing as L did count as a date. So... why would Mother be calling him?

He gestured to L that he needed to take the call, stepping out onto the Wammy's House balcony. What Mother asked him made his blood run cold.

*"Light, is your father with you?"* She asked, and he could hear the worry in her tone. She knew just as well as Light did if Dad wasn't where he said he would be... *"He was supposed to be here an hour ago, and he hasn't called to say something came up."*

"No..." Light could feel the dread knotting up his stomach painfully. "I saw him leave headquarters before L and I went out. Maybe he got stuck in traffic?" But even as he said it, he knew it wasn't the truth. Something was wrong... Dad wouldn't be late for something and not warn in advance about that. It wasn't like him. "I'll call you back." He hung up the phone, dialing Dad's number. *Please pick up...*

He was immediately sent to voicemail. *"You've reached Soichiro Yagami, please leave a message."*

*Something's wrong. Dad never had his phone turned off. He always has his phone on, so he would be the first to know of emergencies. And this isn't a situation where he may have been asked to turn his phone off. This was supposed to just be a date, right?*

He hurried back inside to L. "We have to go."

L gasped quietly as he saw the panic in Light's eyes, making no protest as Light wrapped his arms around L's waist. "What is going on?"

"Dad's been missing for an hour," Light explained, but before he could elaborate, Ryuk told L why what most would see as a menial thing was alarming.

"Soichiro hates being late for anything," he said. "He also always has his phone on, but Light-o got sent straight to voicemail." Light couldn't help but notice that Ryuk sounded worried for Dad's wellbeing as

well, taking Light's phone from his pocket to flip through and find a picture of his Dad. "His lifespan's still intact, so he's alive. You've got that going for you."

Light landed by the open window at headquarters, but L stopped him, grabbing onto his arm. "Light-Kun, if you believe your father is in danger, I wish to help you." Light was about to protest, but he realized L's arm was firmly on his wrist. "I do not want you to go alone," he looked behind Light and to Ryuk. "You are bound by regulations that may make it difficult to assist him."

"Not a problem," Ryuk replied casually, "I've figured out the loopholes of keeping this kid alive. How else would he have survived eighteen years?"

Light huffed. "Because I had a decent predetermined lifespan?"

Ryuk mimicked Light's irritated expression. "Kid. No. You've gotten into way too much nonsense that your smarts are probably the only thing keeping you alive except for my occasional help."

"While I have fewer concerns for your safety," L's voice made Light snap back to him. "If something truly has happened to Yagami-San, it would be faster if we had two investigators searching for him instead of one."

That was a good point. Light nodded to himself. "Okay." He took L's hand, pulling him into his arms, landing immediately in front of his home, and Light's stomach dropped. Why was the door open!?

"Dad!" He hurried inside, L only seconds behind him as Light looked around through the house. He heard L call that he would check upstairs while Light looked around the main area with Ryuk.

What he found scared the hell out of him.

From a glance, nothing was out of place in the darkness. But even before Light realized the breaker had been flipped, so he couldn't turn on the lights, he saw the blood. Slowly, he stepped over to the kitchen table, where a dark stain marred the corner of the table... and next to it lay the Wara Ningyo doll, and a polaroid photo. Of Beyond Birthday, holding Dad's limp body in his arms.

"He took him..." Light could do nothing but stare down at the blood. Was that... Dad's blood? Even the idea made his blood boil, his fear turning into rage. "Bastard!"

L heard the sound of Light's shout, hurrying down the steps. Light saw the gears spin in his head as he saw what happened, turning back to the door to examine it. "There is no indication of it being broken... And all of the windows are shut and locked from the inside."

Light immediately realized what L was doing. He was thinking logically, giving Light something to do so he could think rationally about the situation. He looked around.

"Yeah, and besides the blood on the kitchen table, there isn't any sign of struggle either." He bent down to examine where the kitchen table was concerning where it usually was. "The table is slanted, but only a bit. It almost seems more like Dad fell on it than a struggle." *That's not the only thing. There is blood, but it isn't much. Ryuk confirmed that Dad is alive, so that means Beyond Birthday took him, but he did minimal harm, at least here. What is he thinking!?*

L nodded at Light's assessment, tracing his lips with his thumb as he surveyed the area. "Yes... It does seem that way. From a cursory glance of the area, it appears what happened is B snuck in..."

"He waited for Dad to arrive home," Light continued. "And then when Dad wasn't looking..."

"He must have attacked." L finished, straightening. "We both know of B's capabilities, and if Aizawa-San has elements of your own power, that only confirms my own observations from our youth that B is extraordinarily strong."

Light nodded. That did seem to be the case... He looked back over to the table. "From there, it seems like Dad must have fallen. Maybe B knocked him out, but Dad hit something on the table, just enough to leave some blood. But B didn't pay that any mind, he just took Dad and left."

"See, that is what perplexes me..." L mused. He stepped over to the table, before examining the home, which was by no means dirty, but it was also distinctly lived in. "With the exception of the Wara Ningyo doll and the photo here," he picked up the photo to examine it, "I would not assume this is a case caused by B at all."

"What do you mean?" Light asked. If L suspected something, that was going to be an incredible help. Light knew he could find Beyond Birthday and rescue Dad on his own, but if L could give him insight into *why* this happened, it may prove to be an invaluable advantage.

"Simply put, B prioritizes cleanliness," L explained. "He prioritizes cleanliness to such an extent that even if he broke into someone's home, he would go through the trouble of cleaning it for them. Not only is your home showing no signs of any attempt to clean it to his standards, but the blood on the table is exceedingly abnormal for him."

"Now that you mention it, that is weird," Light said, chewing on his bottom lip as he looked at the scene in front of him. He had to think about this rationally, or he would be no help to Dad. "When I was kidnapped, the place he held me was spotless. At the time, I didn't think anything of it. But that added onto you saying leaving anything out of order is abnormal?" He looked around. "That's not all. Correct me if I'm wrong, but he doesn't seem like the type to gamble with who his target is. If he is attacking someone, it's for a reason. But that would mean this attack was planned, and he would need to have known when Dad would be arriving and when he would be alone. We've seen how quickly Aizawa and I can move, and he has that same speed. He could probably have gotten here even five minutes before Dad arrived and the place would be spotless."

"That's exactly what is worrying me..." L muttered. "There is no doubt this is B's work, but why is he doing it in a way that's so unlike him? The only time he ever stopped cleaning was..." Light's heart clenched as he noticed growing concern mounting in L's features.

"Was when?"

"When he was being watched." L slowly turned to face Light. "Light, I do not believe that B is accompanied by a Shinigami the way you are. But answering my question may be crucial in saving your father's life. How much of what you told Near was a lie?" He moved closer to Light, leaning forward to read his body language. "You spoke to B the night of your birthday, and you spoke to him at Wammy's House. Your conversation related to the matter of A's death, but that is not the only thing you talked about, and I believe it leads directly into what you told Near."

Light's stomach dropped as he realized what L was getting at. It had been bothering him for a long time, but the way Beyond Birthday was talking that day like they were in something against their will... did it have something to do with how Beyond Birthday rose from the sea and how he was so much stronger? He was under the impression that another Shinigami probably thought it would be amusing to give him a notebook, given Zellogi and Gelus, but... what if...

"Ryuk," he could tell Ryuk already knew what he was going to ask, given he was trying to think of an answer. "How could Beyond Birthday have gotten his hands on the Death Note? Is it possible another Shinigami isn't who gave it to him?"

L's eyes widened. "Death Note?"

He probably shouldn't have said that, but Light couldn't care less as he waited for Ryuk to answer. Ryuk seemed... afraid. "Ryuk, what is it?"

"I figured it would just be one of the others making a joke, but if it was, I would have been informed of it by now," Ryuk said, "Even if I was just existing around you, I got routine check-ins from the others just seeing how raising you was going. If a Shinigami gave a notebook to Beyond Birthday and he kidnapped Soichiro, I would probably be the first to know about it. And if he was probably being watched, that means..." he groaned. "The Old Man is probably to blame."

"The Old..." Light turned pale. This couldn't mean... "The Shinigami King? Wait, what would the Shinigami King want with my father?!"

Ryuk shook his head. "I don't know, kid. I wish I could tell you."

L took note of Light's fear at the very idea of the Shinigami King, but he chose not to inquire why. "Light-Kun, this is all on the basis that there is a reason B chose not to clean. It may not be this 'Old Man.'"

"No." Light shook his head, his hair falling in his face. "I've suspected something like this for a while. Something just seemed off about how Beyond Birthday was interacting with me before and after what happened with Yamamoto... It almost seemed like neither of us had a choice in this. Who else would have the power to do that besides the Shinigami King? And think about it. Kira mentioned it, and Gelus did too. I am known as the experiment, not just Ryuk being bored, there's something more to this."

L's brows pressed together, wondering if Light was serious about what he planned to do. "And are you saying you would battle the Shinigami King? If he truly is the reason your father was taken—"

"I'll burn that bridge when I get to it," Light muttered. He eyed the Wara Ningyo doll, picking it up. His experiments with the compass hadn't worked until now since he didn't have any physical belonging to Beyond Birthday. But now, he might not need to use Misa's Death Note... "Right now, I need to see Kira."

L made no move to stop Light. "If that will help your end of the investigation, I trust you." He pulled out his phone, and from the sound of it, he was speaking to Aizawa. "Aizawa-San, it's me. Yagami-San has been abducted by Beyond Birthday, I need you to—"

"What happened?!" Aizawa was standing next to L, but L expected this and paid it no mind, nor did he react as Aizawa ran back and forth to grab the rest of the task force, now holding Mogi in his arms. Mogi, to his credit, was doing a remarkable job holding it together as someone considerably smaller than him held him like he weighed nothing at all. Still, his expression that was basically screaming, "help me," made it clear that he was more than aware he wasn't paid enough for this.

"Beyond Birthday took Dad," Light said. "We don't know why yet, but I think it has something to do with the Shinigami King. I will investigate on the supernatural end, I need the rest of you to handle this on the human end."

Aizawa set Mogi down, placing a hand on his hip. "Right. I'll get on searching for him to see if I sense anything."

"And we should all secure our own families," Matsuda added, searching around the house for additional clues, clear panic welling up at the idea of Dad having gone missing. "If the Chief was a target, anyone could be!"

"Yamamoto can handle it," Light said. "His family home has a bunker and over-the-top security measures, and it's a less likely place for Beyond Birthday to look than the headquarters." He chuckled a bit, thinking about Yamamoto's training with Aizawa and what happened last time Beyond Birthday went after him. "Even if it did, I don't think he would get very far." He gestured back to the table, "It looks like he caught Dad by surprise, which we can easily counter now that we know he's a threat."

"I'll keep watch over everyone just in case," Aizawa said. "Ide, can you—"

"You don't need to ask me," Ide held up his car keys. "I will be at the station to see if Beyond Birthday sends us any clues like he did with Light's kidnapping."

"I will contact Interpol to inform them Beyond Birthday has committed another kidnapping," L said, and Light couldn't help but notice the hint of sadness in his eyes. He didn't want Near to know about this... but he was doing it anyway? "I will pull whatever

resources are necessary. If this truly is the work of some Shinigami King, I don't know how much assistance we can provide, but we must be ready for anything."

Light nodded. "Right," he gasped quietly as he was pulled into a hug by Matsuda.

"You can't just disappear on us. We're in this too! Even if we can't help, just tell us what is going on!" Was... Was Matsuda crying?

"Matsuda..." he returned the hug. "Don't worry. I'll be fine. I'm just investigating. If I find Beyond Birthday in the process, I'll make sure you know about it."

"You better. We didn't fish you out of vents for you to ditch us now," Ide muttered before offering a soft smile. "We'll take care of everything here. Do what you have to do."

"Thank you, guys," Light ran over to pull them all into a group hug, looking over to L, who had lingered off to the side. "You too, L," L yelped as he was pulled in as well, staying there for a long moment before Light pulled away, running upstairs to grab his messenger bag with the grimoire before taking off into the sky and to Misa's home.

*Don't worry, Dad. No matter what I have to do, I'll bring you home... I promise...*

OoOoO

Perhaps Soichiro's lack of concern for his life would be alarming to anyone with a self-preservation instinct. From a logical standpoint, he knew he had been kidnapped by a highly dangerous person. However, he found that he could not bring himself to care. It was better it was him than anyone else in his family, and even if he knew he was probably being held as bait for Light, it gave him enough peace of mind to hope that someone would stop Light from falling into this trap.

How much time had passed since he regained consciousness? There wasn't much of a way to know, something Soichiro realized early on in his confinement, looking down at the stone floor that must be within a cave if the dusty wind from outside was any indication. He

was too far back within the cave to see anything beyond a smog-filled sky, which made him cough from time to time.

He would have gotten up to check for any indication of his whereabouts if not for the chains around his hands, encasing them completely so that he couldn't move. Any resistance against them shortened the chains connected to the wall, making escape impossible.

So he couldn't physically fight... that meant he would need to play this psychologically, if not for any escape, to see what all of this was about.

He could see Beyond Birthday lingering at the cave's entrance, deciding to call out to him. "You know you can come inside, right? I won't bite."

"Shut up." Beyond Birthday snapped, but Soichiro wasn't phased.

"Or what? I know you need me alive as bait for Light. I suppose you could torture me, but if you were going to do that, you would have done so already."

Running his mouth could be fun in some circumstances, but he was actually doing this to analyze Beyond Birthday's body language. They had interacted multiple times during his stay in prison. He knew the ticks... Could he get a read on what was going on?

"If nothing else, could you at least tell me why you are doing this?" He asked. "You are using me as bait for Light, so surely I should know what for."

Beyond's body language closed off from him. *Odd... he was always verbal about his reasons before when we talked...*

"Is this, perhaps, not your own plan? Does somebody else want Light?" Even as he said it, he couldn't help but suspect that was the truth. "You apologized to me before you knocked me out. If this was your plan, I can't imagine you would do that."

"And why does that matter?" Beyond Birthday asked. "You're chained to the wall. All you have to do is sit there looking pretty, and your son will come to you."

Soichiro offered a charming smile. "I'm flattered you consider me pretty," he noticed Beyond Birthday's shoulders shake with a suppressed chuckle. *Good...* He softened again. "I just ask because... I

can't help but worry for you as well."

"....what?" Finally, Beyond Birthday glanced over his shoulder to look at Soichiro, but that soulless look in his eyes flickered for a moment. Soichiro's words had caught his attention, even if he closed himself off again a moment later. "I don't see why. I kidnapped your son. I killed one of your men."

"I am not saying I can ever forgive you for those things," Soichiro responded, leaning forward as much as he could without aggravating the chains. "But if you are doing this against your will, it is only natural I worry about you. If you joined our side, we can help you face whatever this is."

Beyond Birthday laughed, a deranged, broken laugh. The kind he had only heard on the likes of Ryuk. "You're funny. Don't talk like you know what's going on."

"Well, how can I know when you aren't telling me?" He asked innocently, bowing his head as his hair fell into his face. His head still ached from where he must have hit it when he was knocked unconscious. "It's not too late for you, you know? You can still have a life outside of this, and I can make sure you are not pursued if you wish to disappear."

That was when he saw it. The raw pain in Beyond Birthday's eyes. "Even if that was possible, there's nowhere for me to go. Your son's made being caught between two worlds work for him, but it didn't work for me. I only had one person and now he's dead. So no, I can't still have a life outside of this."

Caught between two worlds... he could work with this. "I know how you feel." That caught Beyond Birthday by surprise. Soichiro couldn't believe he was about to explain even a shred of his past to Beyond Birthday, but if it meant there was a chance to stop whatever this was, he would do whatever it took. "When I was young, I was in a similar situation. I didn't think I belonged anywhere, and neither side wanted me unless I changed parts of myself. When my sister passed away... I admit I wanted to give up." He slowly looked up at Beyond Birthday again, letting him see how tired he truly was. "But even if I felt like I was alone, I knew there were people who still cared about me, and I managed to move on from my past and find my own happiness. I do not know you, B, but I know that there must be at least one person who would be there for you no matter what, who wouldn't take advantage of you."

There was hope in Beyond Birthday's eyes, shining for a fleeting moment before he forcefully stamped it down. So there was someone, but he didn't want to think about them?

"If you think a little heart-to-heart is gonna stop this, then you're sorely mistaken," Beyond Birthday snapped, his demeanor closing off again as he crossed his arms, laughing much more genuinely this time, but not convincing enough for Soichiro to believe it. "Even if I wanted to stop this, I *can't*. The plan's already in motion, so your words aren't going to change anything."

Even if Beyond Birthday said that, Soichiro couldn't help but notice something was slightly different in how he carried himself. He had been impacted.

But even if he managed to get through to Beyond Birthday, he couldn't shake the feeling there was more at stake than a feeling of belonging to Beyond Birthday. Was it truly impossible to alter the plan now that it was in motion?

*Light... No matter what happens, I beg you. Don't come for me.*

# Chapter 45

Within merely an hour of Soichiro regaining consciousness, Beyond Birthday knew he had to get away. Away from the situation at hand and away from his prisoner, who proved to be relentless in his quest to figure out what was going on in Beyond Birthday's heart, even when Beyond Birthday went out of his way to ignore him.

Even in the worst scenario, it seemed Light's father never gave up on compassion, even for someone he hated. If that was how he behaved, it was no wonder months of careful examination showed he was the common link that brought the task force together, not as people who shared a secret but as a family through thick and thin. But for Beyond Birthday, hearing the voice of someone who acted as though he cared only caused him pain, which was why he came to the spirit pool in the Shinigami Realm, giving him some space alone to think.

*"I need you to break that Kira task force apart. It would be... irksome for them to try interfering. Utilize a common link to weaken them, and make sure to lure Light Yagami to where he must be by Tanabata."*

He did everything the King asked, but even as he had done it, he knew to remove something would do the opposite of weakening that task force. As long as Soichiro was alive, they would not give up hope for him, and the King knew it as well as Beyond Birthday did. But if Soichiro Yagami were to die, it would become difficult to lure Light Yagami here for the plan that must be completed by tomorrow night.

It didn't matter if the task force was weakened or not. They were human, so matters concerning them were insignificant. The true goal was nothing more than to separate Light from them, to leave him open to the King's plan.

Heaving a sigh, Beyond Birthday gently ran his hand over the reflective waters of the pool. "Show me Light Yagami."

The waters rippled under his touch, revealing the image of Light in an apartment with a girl that Beyond Birthday realized within mere moments could only be Kira. So Light truly did locate Kira and choose to befriend her... She was flipping through pages of the grimoire as Light meditated, floating a meter off the ground, seemingly to calm his rampant thoughts if he wished to perform whatever enchantment he planned to use correctly.

But even as he tried to calm himself, Beyond could already see Light's hands shaking, his fists clenching and unclenching as he forced himself to take a deep breath. His father's disappearance was impacting him more than his own kidnapping...

Beyond thought back to that kidnapping and the attack on Daiki Yamamoto. Maybe once, he was jealous of the life of smiles and warmth that Light managed to have, and he wanted him to understand the life people like them shared. But that feeling... he may have wished that suffering on Light once, but time had given him the realization being alone and afraid was the worst thing anyone could be. He could never wish it on anyone... but it seemed he had gotten what he wanted as Light slowly opened his eyes, showing that same fear and desperation Beyond had seen on himself so many times...

*"I do not know you, B, but I know that there must be at least one person who would be there for you no matter what, who wouldn't take advantage of you."*

Beyond had to catch his breath as he eyed the pool again. He had to know. But it was a dangerous move to make, to risk it... But the plan was in motion, and the King was busy preparing for it. Could he get away with just a moment?

He touched the pool again, squeezing his eyes shut, daring himself to do it for even just a second. "Show me Nate River."

The water rippled under his touch again, this time revealing Nate sitting alone in his room, a puzzle discarded where it had been completed, as he focused his attention on the Wara Ningyo doll he must have repaired himself. Beyond watched as Nate's eyes suddenly flickered towards the window, hopeful for even the smallest moment before he realized the one at the window was only a bird, and he looked away with disappointment.

"Nate..."

He wanted nothing more than to reach through the water, to touch the child he had known for so long. To be able to remind himself of the good days, even for only a moment. Back when everything was okay... when he and Anthony would do everything together, with Nate dutifully toddling after them.

*Four-year-old Nate held up the puppet-making tools, examining how they glistened against the ceiling lights, before looking over the finger puppets B had made for himself. B smiled as he took notice of Nate's fascination,*

*pulling Nate into his lap to guide his hands, taking one of the incomplete puppets for Nate to work on.*

*"See, you need to file off the excess on the bottom like this," he guided Nate's small hands through the movements, watching as Nate observed the motion with that analytical gaze unbefitting his age, pulling his hands away to do it himself.*

*It took him only a moment before he smiled in that funny way he always did when he managed to do something right. B beamed, ruffling Nate's hair.*

*"There you go!" Nate turned back to him, smiling as he took in the praise. "You did it!"*

*B turned when he heard laughter in the doorway, where Anthony lingered with crossed arms and that adorable side smile when he was trying to hide his amusement. "You're already teaching him to terrorize Wammy's House with puppets?"*

*"You bet!" B said, pulling Near close and throwing his fist to the sky. "With double the manpower, we will overwhelm Roger's office with puppets! He won't know what hit him."*

*Nate nodded eagerly to Anthony, who only rolled his eyes in response. He made no move to stop B from his plan, which was as close to permission as he would ever get. "Alright. You two have fun terrorizing Roger."*

*"We will!"*

B couldn't help but smile at the memory, swatting the vision away in the pool to ensure nobody else could see it. He didn't need that vision anymore. He could take comfort in knowing Nate was alright.

Did he know? The question lingered in the back of his mind, despite his efforts to shake it away. Did Nate know what B had become? That he had taken those abilities that Nate never judged him for and used them to become a monster?

His eyes widened at the very idea. A monster... Nate might see him as a monster...

B shook his head vehemently. "I'm not a monster. I'm just... I'm just following the King's..."

He couldn't finish that sentence, gasping softly as realization dawned

on him. The one factor the King never spoke of in his plan, the one that should have been the most important and unpredictable, despite his insistence that Light needed to come alone. Light had been told nothing about this. Was the King under the assumption Ryuk would tell him he needed to come alone, or...

"No..." He could see it in his mind's eye, what would happen if he left things as they were. He could hear Light Yagami's scream, the same way he had screamed when he lost Anthony... "No, no... I took measures to avoid that, right?" he looked back down at the pool as though it would give him the answer he desperately needed. "I encouraged Daiki Yamamoto to run back to Light, and he would train Shuichi Aizawa not to..."

But could he leave that up to chance? If Light Yagami's creation got involved when the King wanted Light alone...

"I can't let this happen." He stood up from the pool, glancing back to where he knew the King was waiting, no doubt paying Light far more attention to ensure everything was according to plan. Even if he was paying attention to B, this technically wasn't against his orders. "I won't let this happen."

OoOoO

As Light burned the Wara Ningyo doll to ash, letting its remains become one with the compass on the table, the needle finally began to move.

Misa cheered, throwing her fist to the sky in celebration, similarly to a magical girl. "We did it!" She picked up the grimoire, pulling out a sparkly pen to begin writing down her notes alongside Light's on the page dedicated to the compass. "Burning... the doll..."

It worked... Light slowly picked up the compass from where it sat on the desk, holding it gingerly in the palm of his hand. He tested the angles to make sure it kept spinning before his eyes lit up with excitement. "I worked!" He ran over to Misa, picking her up and spinning her with excitement, making her yelp as she still had her pen in hand. "Misa, it worked!"

She nodded eagerly. "I know!" Light put her down, and Misa hurried

over to the compass to examine it, still spinning with Beyond Birthday's direction. He must be moving at the moment. "I see... that explains why tests with my notebook didn't work if we needed to burn it."

"It looks like it." With this, he could find Dad! Light picked up the compass as Misa began pushing him toward the window.

"Now go on, Light," Misa encouraged him, placing the grimoire back in his messenger bag. "You have a dad to save!" She picked up Kuro from where he had decided to sleep on top of her Death Note for the maximum inconvenience. "Kuro and I are rooting for you!"

Light grinned. With her help, there was a chance he could bring Dad home by tomorrow. "And I'm rooting for you to build a new world." He spread his wings, taking off into the night sky as he pulled his own Death Note out of his bag. He remembered how Beyond Birthday had done it, mimicking the gesture as he watched his notebook transform into a golden scythe.

Ryuk's eyes widened, grinning as he saw his surrogate son's new weapon. "A golden scythe?" he laughed. "It suits you."

"Thanks," Light looked down at the scythe. It felt... right, with the weapon in his hand this way. "Hopefully, I won't have to use it just yet."

He looked down at the compass that placed him at Mount Ōmine, landing on a rock tower overlooking a deep cliff as he looked around for any sign of life or any clue to where Dad could be. Once he knew where Dad was, he would go back to the task force to inform them, but first, he had to find him or find Beyond Birthday and deal with him.

"Your Dad isn't here."

The hair on the back of Light's neck stood on end when he heard the voice behind him, but Light let none of that on as he turned around, a smug smirk on his face and scythe ready to attack at a moment's notice. "Speak of the devil. I knew I would find you here." His eyes narrowed, all mirth gone. "What the hell is going on? What have you done with Dad?!"

He was taken aback by Beyond Birthday's response or lack thereof. He made no move to attack. He didn't even seem to have his notebook on him. His eyes were half-lidded, looking completely drained as he

looked at Light. "Light, put that away."

"Huh?" Light blinked but held the scythe defensively when he noticed Beyond Birthday take a step closer. "Stop!"

To his surprise, Beyond Birthday did stop walking. "You think I'm true evil, but you're wrong."

Where the hell was this coming from? "Then prove it."

Beyond raised an eyebrow as though asking if Light meant that, but he decided to explain anyway, putting his hands in his pockets. "People aren't ruled by just good or evil. It's not that simple," he said, making it clear to Light that this was kind of a redundant question.

"Yeah, I know that," he said. "But why are you making a point of that now? After you kidnapped my father?"

"I am telling you because this is important to what is happening now," Beyond Birthday insisted, and though Light had every reason to believe this was a lie, he decided to hear him out. What did he have to lose in just listening? "For someone who *chose* the life of a Shinigami, you sure hold onto the mortals you consider family. But do you really think that you are like them? We are the same, Yagami." He took a step forward, and Light held his ground, "You and I stand by what we see as good, only to cast a shadow on those we love. You with your task force, me with those children. And when that love disappears, we lose ourselves and are swallowed by the void, willing to go to any length to prevent that kind of loss."

"You don't know what you're talking about," Light snapped, but it didn't hold as much venom as he had expected.

Beyond Birthday shrugged in response. "Believe what you will. But you cannot deny how similar we are. I am especially sensitive to the mortality of others, as are you, Light."

Sensitive to the mortality of others... That statement was true, no matter how much Light wanted to deny it. He remembered how he felt when he almost lost Aizawa or how he felt now with the possibility of losing Dad forever. That desperation... hopelessness...

He shook himself, pressing the scythe against Beyond Birthday's chest, and he made no move to avoid it. "None of that matters," he insisted. So much for backup. He was doing this now. "This ends when I kill you." If the Shinigami King was involved, he knew it wouldn't be that

simple, but maybe...

Beyond Birthday slowly pushed Light's scythe away from his chest, and Light noticed something akin to fondness in his eyes. "That's where you're wrong, Yagami. Or perhaps part of you already knows that." He held up a neatly folded piece of paper. "But that is why I am here."

Ryuk leaned forward from where he had perched on a rock, cocking his head to the side. "What's that?"

Beyond Birthday chuckled, knowing he had their attention. "This little thing? I'm not surprised you're interested in it." He made direct eye contact with Light, emphasizing his words. "This piece of paper is the only way to save your friend and make him human again."

What? So there was a way to return Aizawa to normal, not just his theories? If there was, why would Beyond Birthday know that? "Why should I trust you?"

"There is nothing the King hates more than disobedience," Beyond Birthday said, and Ryuk's expression only served to confirm that for Light, making him more inclined to listen to what Beyond Birthday had to say. "If this is to end, you have to come alone, but with your friend's current state, he has the means to appear anyway. And if that happens, the King will not hesitate to destroy him."

Light's eyes widened, looking at Ryuk for confirmation. "Ryuk, he can't be serious!"

Ryuk only offered a resigned nod. "If the King wants you coming alone, except maybe me as your guardian... yeah. He would punish Aizawa for coming, especially if he came on his own accord and not on your orders."

Beyond Birthday nodded respectfully to Ryuk. "Thank you for confirming my claims," he adjusted how he was holding the paper between his fingers. "I know what it's like to lose a precious person, and even if you don't believe me, I don't want you to experience the same thing." He shrugged, noticing the look in Light's eyes. "You probably think this is just some underhanded tactic on my part to gain an advantage, but I swear to you, it's not. Your friend isn't as bound by the rules as you and I are, but that won't save him. So I'm willing to offer you a deal."

Light's brows pressed together. A deal? He couldn't deny he was

intrigued by it. "And what is my end of it?" He asked. "You're giving me that piece of paper and my father's location, but what do you get out of all of this?"

Beyond Birthday paused. It seemed he hadn't considered what he wanted in return, slowly grinning as ideas came to mind. "I could ask you for anything, now couldn't I? And you'll be obligated to return the favor. Your friend's and father's lives are precious to you, so I could ask for L's life in return…." Light sucked in a breath. *Don't do that, please don't make me choose.* Beyond Birthday noticed his horror. "Oh, that is very tempting to make you bring me someone's head in return... But I'm not going to do that. Instead, I want you to promise me something."

A promise? What if he asked for something awful? What if he did ask Light to kill someone?! He surveyed the way Beyond Birthday was carrying himself. Could he just take the paper and leave? Surely if the Shinigami King wanted him for something, he could figure out where Dad was on his own.

But still, he asked, "…what is that promise?"

He wasn't expecting Beyond Birthday to suddenly look tired, his sorrow for everything that happened finally making itself known. "Put an end to this. I don't just mean Wammy's House. I mean all programs like it, gathering kids and forcing them to hone skills they may not want to and become weapons." He crossed his arms, shaking his head as his tone became bitter. "I don't care if Wammy's House has apparently gotten better or whatever bullshit Watari might say. End it. Let children be safe to pursue their passions, not something forced on them by the adults around them. Change this world for the better."

That was what Beyond Birthday wanted? Of anything he could have asked, Light couldn't help but be surprised by the request that seemed so reasonable.

Beyond Birthday smiled fondly, only highlighting the bags under his eyes. "You wanted to go into politics, right? This is just one more thing to check off your list." He offered out his hand for Light to shake. "Do we have a deal?"

A reasonable request in exchange for Aizawa and Dad's lives... Light didn't hesitate to shake his hand, locking them into their bargain. "You have my word."

B grinned for the first time, easily handing Light the piece of paper,

allowing him to unfold it and lay eyes on the symbol he realized he had seen before. B pointed to the symbol. "See this symbol? The Cho Ku Rei. It's a healing symbol. It doesn't matter how you do it as long as it's permanent, but etch it over your friend's heart. It will purify him, and the energy you used will return to you." He laughed a bit, "Trust me. I don't know what the King's planning, but you're probably gonna need your full power anyway."

But that wasn't nearly Light's main concern. "Is it safe for him?"

"That's something for you to find out." At Light's look of disbelief, B threw his hands up in surrender. "What? Do you think this has ever been done before? I know it will work, so it's worth the risk." He placed his hand on his hip. "Either the purification doesn't work, or he's turned to dust by an infuriated Shinigami King. Pick your poison, if you will."

He had a point about that... But he was still going to make sure Aizawa had a say in the matter. If he didn't want to risk this, they could find a way around anything involving the Shinigami King. "And what about Dad?"

"Ah, that's the good part," B said. "Remember when I said the King was preparing for our showdown? This is what I meant. He's preparing the stage, and your father is the way to get you there."

Light had feared this was the case. But could he even trust this was real information? "You don't mean—?!"

"Your father is in the Shinigami Realm."

# Chapter 46

The Shinigami Realm... Light should have known. Really, that should have been the first place he thought to look! Of course, that was the best place to hide him if he didn't want humans involved this time.

So what did he know now? He knew where Dad was, and he knew the King wanted him for some reason... but Light couldn't help but doubt that notion. With how much the King despised rule breakers, to the point he was willing to kill Gelus or cause any imaginable horror to those who disobeyed, why would he take such a risk in not informing Light about something like this? Was it as simple as knowing Light was a teenager and there was a higher chance of him listening to his loved one being in danger instead of a direct order?

He put the notion that the Shinigami King wanted him in the back of his mind, though he could use it as an excuse if the others tried to stop him. If there was even a chance Dad was in the Shinigami Realm, he had to investigate it.

But before that... he looked down at the piece of paper Beyond Birthday had given him. He had investigated healing symbols, but his research had never gone anywhere. Why should he trust the word of Beyond Birthday? For all he knew, all of this was a lie.

Nevertheless, he remembered his promise to Aizawa that if there was a chance to undo what had happened without it being fatal, he would do it. And if there was even a 1% chance Beyond Birthday was honest and Aizawa could be killed... what did he have to lose?

At the very least, he needed to ask Aizawa about the matter. If he needed to return to report back to everyone as it was, there was no harm in asking what Aizawa thought about a choice that would drastically impact his life.

He entered headquarters through the window just across from the staircase to the main room, hurrying downstairs while Ryuk followed behind him.

"Whatcha planning to do, Light-o? You get so quiet when you're tense."

"I need to talk to Aizawa," Light explained, looking around and hearing voices from downstairs. His eyes widened as he found Mother

and Sayu in headquarters, running over to him. Wasn't the plan for everyone to go to Yamamoto's bunker?!

"Light!" They both shouted, talking over one another quickly to see if he was well, and Sayu was the one to mention the answer to his question. "Yamamoto was going to take us to his bunker, but I'm not leaving!" She insisted. "Aizawa took him back home for his safety, but Ryuzaki agreed to let us stay in a safe part of headquarters."

So Yamamoto was safe, though probably annoyed he was missing the opportunity to beat the crap out of Beyond Birthday. Light managed to smile for their comfort.

"I'm okay, guys," he said, ruffling Sayu's hair, which caused it to fall out of its ponytail, making Sayu pout and distract her from worrying. He looked up to everyone else. "I told you I would be back before I did anything."

Ide pursed his lips, craning his head to the side as he noticed the piece of paper rolled up in Light's hand, and the compass at his hip. "What's on the paper? Did you finally get the compass working?"

Light sucked in a breath through his teeth. This was going to be interesting. "I got the compass working, but I ended up having a run-in with Beyond Birthday," he was quick to continue before anyone could panic, holding up the paper. "He told me how to get Aizawa back to normal... also, if he tries to follow me to save Dad, he'll probably get executed."

"What?!" Matsuda jumped up. "Light, that's crazy! Why would Beyond Birthday even bother to try helping? He's probably lying to lower your defenses! What if this will just kill Aizawa?!"

"I thought the same at first," Light muttered, looking down at the paper. "But this symbol is real and lines up with my own research, though mine never went very far." He looked back up at everyone. "Which is why I want to ask what Aizawa thinks. I won't let you take the risk of following me, even if it turns out to be a bluff, but if you want to go through with this, even if there is a risk of it not working, is your choice."

Aizawa's arms were crossed from where he had been sitting on the couch before slowly standing up and taking the paper from Light. "Yeah, I looked into this as well." He rolled the paper up again and handed it back to Light. "If I could help you save your father, I would say wait, but if you're saying I can't do that anyway, you might as well

do it now."

"Now?" Ide asked worriedly, his brows pressed together, knowing that this was Aizawa's choice and he would never take that away, but he didn't like the risks attached. "Shouldn't we at least wait until the Chief is back?"

"No," L stood up from his chair where he had been observing until now, pressing his thumb to his lips as he took the paper from Light. "Doing this now will give us valuable information about what Light-Kun will be up against. If this works, it means that B is willing to help, which will put into question if he is a true threat."

"But couldn't that just be him trying to remove Light's only ally that can fight him?" Matsuda protested.

Mogi nodded, supporting what Matsuda was saying. "Yeah. We saw what happened last time the two of you fought. Two-against-one would not be ideal if he can avoid it. Whether it helps or kills Aizawa, that doesn't say anything."

Ide's eyes widened at the word 'kill,' and Aizawa had to squeeze his hand reassuringly. "I'm not too worried about that." He insisted, and Light couldn't help but be mildly surprised by how calm Aizawa was about this. "If he wanted me dead, and this whole thing about me being executed if I go is true, then why not just leave things as they are? And if this does help me, the power Light transferred to me goes back to Light, meaning he wouldn't need me anyway."

"But that would also happen if you died, right?" Ide asked. "He could be trying to kill you the same way he attacked Yamamoto."

"I do not believe that is the case," L mused. "With what Light-Kun and I deduced already about B's mental state, this may line up if he is not doing this of his own will. Nevertheless, if what you are saying is correct, Light-Kun having his strength would be beneficial."

"If it helps," Ryuk offered. "He shouldn't die. It's a healing symbol, and he wouldn't have even died from the head injury that caused this, so that's not going to come back, and if it did, it still wouldn't kill him."

Aizawa blinked, then he blinked again before smacking his forehead with his hand and letting out a loud groan of exasperation and disbelief. "Seriously?! You couldn't have mentioned there is no danger before, Apple Demon?!"

"Hey," Ryuk threw his hands up in surrender, "I don't tell people human lifespans! I'm only mentioning it right now because you're not exactly human, and this back-and-forth about whether you'll die is boring. Frankly, I want to see what happens."

Mother was taken aback by Aizawa's comment, glancing to where Aizawa was staring at what to her looked like the far wall. "Shuichi, you can see Ryuk?"

Aizawa snapped out of his exasperation to look over at her. "Yeah, I've been able to for..." he checked the date. "Oh. It will be a year in about two weeks."

"Uh," Matsuda gave small jazz hands. "Happy debatably-undead anniversary?"

Aizawa responded with a smile. "Hopefully it won't be." He looked around at everyone else, lingering on Ide, the only person who would be able to change his mind. "Now that the Death God confirmed I'm not going to die from this, do we have any objections?"

Nobody protested, and Ide softened as he looked into Aizawa's eyes, which may soon be back to normal. "It's your choice, but I'll admit knowing I won't lose you makes me feel more comfortable with it happening."

From the look on Aizawa's face, hearing the reminder he was free to make his own choices, and hearing it from a romantic partner, was the most attractive thing he had ever heard. While Matsuda tearfully mumbled to himself about being desperate to have a partner of his own, Light decided to intervene before there was a detour. "So we're doing this?"

"Yes, I believe so," L said, cocking his head to the side. "Do you know how to do this?"

"Yeah," Light grimaced as he remembered what Beyond Birthday said and the implication. "I need to make a permanent mark over where I first transferred power, which in Aizawa's case is over his heart. So..." he looked back over at Aizawa to determine his reaction. "I need to make it permanent, but my abilities don't include it."

Aizawa understood the implication just as well as Light did. "Of course they don't. God forbid undoing something is as simple as doing it." He ran a hand through his hair. "I would say just use a knife to get it over with, but it sounds like a tattoo is the only option, given I can't exactly

be cut by things?" Light nodded, and Aizawa shrugged in response. "Whatever works. I'm fine with it as long as you're not harvesting my spiritual essence or some shit." But even as he said that he laughed softly, knowing that was essentially what was happening.

Matsuda's brow furrowed, unsure whether to be relieved Aizawa was so calm or concerned by it. "Aizawa, you're weirdly calm about this."

Ryuk brightened, looking over to Light before pulling out a piece of his own Death Note and tapping Matsuda on the back. Light was taken aback. He had honestly forgotten Matsuda couldn't see Ryuk, with how often he spoke to him indirectly. "Oh, he's always been like this," Ryuk said, cackling as he did so. "No matter what I do, I can't phase him!"

"Woah!" Matsuda's eyes lit up. "Ryuk, I can see you!"

"No way!" Sayu ran over to Matsuda. "Ryuk's actually real and not an imaginary friend with Light's superpowers?!"

Light crossed his arms, rolling his eyes, "Why not just reveal yourself to everyone, Ryuk. It would be easier to communicate with you that way." But even then, he noticed Mother had fallen quiet by the sidelines while Sayu was delighted by seeing Ryuk and asking if she could have his earring.

Ryuk tapped Ide on the head, looking back at Aizawa and seeing that unphased, relaxed demeanor of eighteen years ago. "Glad to see you back to yourself, Shuichi."

"It's good to feel more like myself," Aizawa said, before glancing back over at Light, his words snapping Light out of his thoughts. "Can we get on with this already? You have the Chief to save."

*"Hold on,"* Watari suddenly spoke up from the computer. *"If we are doing this, I know you are capable, Light, but we must monitor everything to ensure his safety. I have the necessary supplies."*

Ide crossed his arms, shaking his head in annoyance. "I know you just want to collect the data on this, old bastard," he grumbled, and a bit louder, he said, "But I'm not against making sure this is safe."

"So we're glossing over Watari having the supplies for tattoos?" Mogi asked.

"I did many strange things when I was Light's age," L said as though

that was a perfectly normal thing and not to some extent concerning.

"Do you have a tattoo?" Light asked. L just offered a smile that told Light that was something he would need to discover for himself, to which Light had to stop himself from turning bright red as his mind went to places L had probably not thought of.

Aizawa was quick to meet Watari downstairs in the lab, and by the time Light was down the elevator, Aizawa had taken the stairs and was already on the table, having hooked himself up to the heart monitors that tried and failed to get a read on him. His shirt was unbuttoned before lying down so Light could have easier access. "Alright, Light. Do what you have to do."

Light hesitated. Wasn't this supposed to hurt badly? Wasn't that why mostly yakuza did this? "Do you want any kind of numbing agent? Local anesthesia?"

"I don't need anything, Light." Aizawa insisted, but after noticing Ide's concern, he added, "I'll let you know if I need anything."

Aizawa didn't need anything. Watari carefully watched over Light's shoulder, showing him how to go through with the procedure properly. The only complication was that Aizawa's skin resisted the needle, but Light found he could get past that, the magic in Aizawa's veins responding to Light being the one to do this, allowing him in. But if Aizawa was aware of that minor hiccup, he didn't say anything about it to Ide while making casual conversation trying to answer one of the questions on Yumi's math homework because apparently not even two of the NPA's best detectives knew how the school system was teaching math anymore.

But Light couldn't judge that topic of conversation, as he, too, used math as a means of distraction when he was stressed. If this task didn't require his undivided attention, he would have done what he could to help the two of them with the math problem.

It took less than an hour to complete, given that the symbol was smaller than Light's palm and relatively thin with no intricate detailing. But despite that, the moment the last of the ink was applied to Aizawa's skin, the response was instantaneous. Light's eyes widened as the symbol took on a glow as the dark magic Light had transferred desperately escaped Aizawa's chest and returned to Light through his hand.

Aizawa heaved for breath as he collected himself, the first show of

reaction to the whole procedure, but Light was solely focused on how he watched Aizawa's skin slowly return to a healthy, more *alive* color.

Ide noticed it as well, but he didn't let himself be relieved as he slowly shook Aizawa, helping him sit up. "Shuichi? Are you alright?"

"Yeah..." Aizawa's eyes slowly opened, and everyone was met with his natural hazel color, not the gold they had grown used to. He took a moment to collect himself before gesturing at Light. "That felt wrong." But even his discomfort at the situation did nothing to dampen the smile forming on his face as he looked down at his hands, noticing they were warm, laughing with relief. "I'm human again."

Watari was noticeably disappointed by Aizawa's overjoyed announcement but said nothing about that. "I am relieved to report your vitals are showing successfully on the charts," he said instead. "Your heartbeat is slightly elevated, but that likely has more to do with what you just experienced than anything regarding your health. But for your continued health, I advise you and your family remain in headquarters so you can be watched."

"Alright." Aizawa's eyes slowly began drooping, "The kids are upstairs already, right?" Ide nodded, and it seemed he already knew what was about to happen as Aizawa mumbled, "Good. Good, I'm just going to..." before leaning against Ide's chest, his breathing already evened out as sleep finally took hold after a year. Light quickly looked up at his vitals but found Watari was right. Aizawa's vitals remained stable. He was just asleep.

"Lucky," Matsuda grumbled as he stepped through the door from the back area of the laboratory. "I can never fall asleep that easily."

Ide chuckled, slowly laying Aizawa down on the actual bed in the laboratory for him to sleep. "I will stay with him." But knowing his partner was alright did not end his concerns in any capacity, turning back to Light. "You're still going after your father, aren't you?"

"Of course I am," Light insisted. "I can't just leave Dad there!" He had no plans of mentioning the factor of the Shinigami King in his decision unless he had to. This was his choice, and he wanted them to know that. "Even if Beyond Birthday was lying about this, there's a chance I will find Dad there. I'm going."

"Light..."

Light froze as he felt Mother's arms wrapped around him from behind. What? He turned his head, seeing her eyes brimming with tears as though she had expected something like this would happen all along. Light had to look away, biting the inside of his cheek as memories of his childhood came to mind.

"I'm sorry." Light couldn't stop himself from saying. "I'm sorry I couldn't be the son you wanted. This is probably what you thought would happen all along, isn't it?"

He didn't know why he said it. They had talked before about this, hadn't they? She understood Ryuk wasn't to blame for what happened to Claudia, and he wasn't possessed; he was just different. This was all resolved, right? But that didn't stop him from saying those words, and some part of his mind couldn't help but wonder for a moment if she had been right all along.

He couldn't have prepared himself for her response.

"You're right." Mother whispered, but even as she said that she didn't let go. "I did fear something like this would happen. That one day, something would happen, and I could lose you... my son..."

*Lose...me...?* "Mother..."

"Promise me, Light," she insisted. "I know you will bring your father home, but you have to promise me you will come back too."

Could he make that promise? He didn't know what would be waiting for him on the other side. "I'll do what I can."

Mother only held on tighter. "No." For a moment, Light thought he heard anger, but he paled as he realized it wasn't anger at all. It was fear. "I'm not letting you go until you promise me."

She...She really meant this. She wanted him to come home. Slowly, Light turned in her hold, returning the embrace. His eyes burned with the unshed tears. He never thought something like this would happen. "I... I promise, Ma."

It was that word, a form of addressing her that wasn't strictly formal, that made her come undone, burying her face in Light's chest. Ryuk softened at the proof he had waited for all those years that even if Light's powers brought danger, she truly did love her son, which motivated him to touch her with a piece of his Death Note.

"Don't worry," Ryuk said. "I'll bring him home."

Somehow, Ryuk's promise was the thing to calm Ma down. She looked up at Ryuk, who had cared for her son for so many years, and she nodded, clutching onto her locket as she finally let go of Light. "I know you will. You've always protected him."

L tapped Light's shoulder, holding out a belt with what appeared to be flash bangs attached to it. "Emergency flash bangs," he explained, "So you can escape from B if you need to."

Light brightened at the gesture, locking the belt onto his waist before looking up at L again. L, who welcomed his secret so much... Should he... "Hey, L, do you mind holding onto something for me?" He looked down at his wrist, removing the watch Dad had gifted him for being accepted into university before passing it to L. "It's important to me, and I don't want it to be broken."

L examined the watch for a moment before locking it onto his wrist. "I will safeguard your watch, Light-Kun. Until you return."

"Right. Until I return."

Ryuk promised to bring him home. Light knew Ryuk would not make that kind of promise unless he was confident he could do it, but in case something happened... It was best to do this, just in case he never got the chance again. He grabbed the collar of L's shirt, pulling him forward into a kiss that was ultimately not that great on L's end, likely in part due to his surprise, but the quality was not the purpose of the kiss at all. It was a show of affection... and it was a goodbye.

Light pulled away, smiling to himself as he noticed L's eyes were as wide as saucers, his cheeks turning pink as his genius brain processed what had just happened.

But by the time he got his bearings, Ryuk and Light were gone.

OoOoO

So it seemed the time had come... that was what the King had planned. If Tanabata was a night of clear skies as the stars lighting up even the Shinigami Realm indicated. Though the holiday this night

pertained to had little to do with what the King had in mind, any night when humans held a festival pertaining to deities, spirits of all kinds were more active in response. That must be why.

As a Shinigami, it would be her duty to observe what was to transpire. Nevertheless, it was just as easy for her to slip away from her siblings to travel down to the human world for what she had to do, finding Misa looking around an ancient temple dressed in her kimono as she must be searching for a way to assist her friend, Light Yagami.

Gelus had been right to care for this girl as much as he did. Rem slowly approached her, touching her arm with a piece of her own Death Note. "Misa, there is nothing you can do to help Light Yagami."

Misa squeaked at the sound of a voice who knew her name, spinning around on her heel before stopping at the sight of a Shinigami, her worry quickly turning to delight as though she somehow recognized Rem.

"You must be Rem!" She said, clinging onto Rem as though she felt at home with a Shinigami. "Gelus told me about you." But just as quickly as she realized who was here, she processed what Rem was saying. "What do you mean there is nothing I can do?" She asked. "Light helped me, so shouldn't I be allowed to help him?"

"I wish that could be the case," Rem replied, "But you should be glad the King has not turned his eyes to you." She noticed her words did nothing to assure Misa, so she decided to remedy what she was saying. "I believe I know what the King has planned, and if I am right, Light Yagami will be just fine, no matter what he chooses."

Misa tilted her head to the side. "What he chooses...?"

Rem nodded. "We will have to see. But from now on, I will stay with you and accompany you as you build your new world."

The idea appealed to Misa, though she took a minute to think about everything she had just heard, looking around to ensure that nobody was around. "You're sure Light will be okay?"

"Yes. Light Yagami and Soichiro Yagami will be fine."

That assurance was enough to make Misa smile radiantly, clapping her hands together with delight. "Well then, while he's doing that, we should get to work!"

OoOoO

Light sent a text to Yamamoto to inform him of the situation and Aizawa's condition before following Ryuk into the sky, as he did not know where he was going. He grabbed onto Ryuk's hand as though he was only a little boy again, looking to his parental figure for guidance on what to do.

Though it was daytime, they flew high enough into the sky that the world around them was dark. He noticed Ryuk began laughing as he caught sight of the stars, which shone with colors Light doubted humans could see. "What's so funny?" Light asked.

"Oh, nothing," Ryuk said. "But I think I figured out what the Old Man wants. I should have known!" Light blinked. All urgency had just left Ryuk's demeanor. What was going on? "Come on, kid. I know where your Dad is."

He decided to take Ryuk's sudden cheer as a good sign. Ryuk would never hurt him. If Ryuk was not worried, why should Light be? That was enough to ease Light's fears as the world around them shifted. What was once Earth was now a grey wasteland with the sky as the only resemblance to where Light had been before.

"Welcome to the Shinigami Realm, kid," Ryuk said, but his words held no cheer, seeing the world that he did everything he could to leave.

Light spun around in every direction, taking in the limited sights of Ryuk's former home. "Woah..." he gazed out over the vast outstretches of dead land and the remains of what must have been buildings. "What happened here?"

"I couldn't even begin to tell you." Ryuk muttered, gently pulling Light along to show him where to go. "Come on, your Dad should be this way."

The trip took what felt like an eternity but was likely less than a minute before Ryuk landed on a ledge atop what must have been the highest mountain in the Shinigami Realm, and on the other side of that ledge was a cave. Ryuk cautiously placed his hand at the entrance and wasn't surprised to find a barrier preventing him from entering.

"Looks like I was right," he chuckled. "Well, Light-o, it looks like this is as far as I can go."

Light stared at the pitch-blackness inside, his heart beating against his ribcage. What was he going to find in there? Was he going to see the King? What was the King like? "So if I go in there, Dad will be there?"

"That's right."

Dad was in there. But he wasn't the only one. "...what's going to happen?"

Ryuk was taken aback as Light squeezed his hand. The sight of Light afraid of anything was so rare that, for a moment, he didn't know what to do about it. But that confusion faded almost immediately. Anyone would be afraid to face the Shinigami King.

He knew better than to tell Light what he thought this was, just in case he was wrong, instead ruffling Light's hair, messing it up to show Light there was nothing to worry about. "Nothing for you to be afraid of," he assured him. "I may be stuck out here, but I've got your back. Besides, we both know the King likes you."

"I know." Light nodded, managing to smile as his confidence returned. "You're right. I'm just going to get Dad and get out." He ran through the barrier that allowed him inside, scouring the dark cave for any sign of Dad, trying not to think about the chains and skulls adorning the walls. "Dad?"

"Light?"

Light whipped around at the sound of Dad's voice, his eyes adjusting to the darkness just enough to see Dad chained to the wall. "Dad!" He sprinted to his side, setting his scythe down as he looked over the chains. These weren't normal chains. "What happened? Are you okay?"

"I'm fine, Light," Dad assured him, but Light found he resisted as Light picked up the scythe to slice the chains away from the wall, making it easier to remove them from Dad's hands. "Light, leave me here."

"No." He wasn't going to be putting up with Dad's self-sacrificing nonsense. "I promised everyone I would bring you home."

"Light—"

"I'm not listening!" He helped Dad stand, looking around again to

ensure they were alone. He would need to speak to the Shinigami King, but first, he needed to get Dad to Ryuk, who could take him home. "Come on, let's go—"

Dad disappeared.

"Dad?!" But Light recoiled as he realized Dad wasn't the one who disappeared. Light was. His eyes widened as he found himself in a world of endless night sky, looking down as he discovered he was standing on water. He tapped it experimentally, watching the water ripple under his feet. "Where am I...?"

"Well, look at that. You did show up."

Light froze at the sound of that voice, but he found this time there was no fear as he realized the voice was B. Nevertheless, he gripped tighter onto his scythe, ready for a fight should it come to that. "Where are we?"

B could only offer a shrug before he paused, his playful expression becoming serious. "It appears the King didn't take your friend into account because I don't see how anyone could access us here. But is he human again?"

B was the one who had given him the confirmation of the cure, but Light still found himself surprised by the genuine concern in his voice. "Yes. He's fine." Slowly, Light dared to let himself lower the scythe, letting it return to its normal form as a Death Note. "What do you think the King wants from us?"

"I merely wanted to speak with both of you."

It wasn't B who answered that question. It was a voice with an unknown owner... one that came from everywhere and nowhere, Light looked around for any sign of the voice that he couldn't even identify as being any one thing, but he could feel a shiver up his spine.

He took a breath, quick to get his own voice back. He knew who this was. "Speak with us? What for?"

There was nobody around, but Light could feel the amusement from the Shinigami King, only proven as it laced into his words. "To see what kind of... person you both are. There was no requirement for either of you to come to me, but you both decided to do so."

"What the hell are you talking about?" B snapped. "You've given me

orders since you pulled me out of the ocean."

The Shinigami King made no move to deny that. "Yes, I did. And I trained you, allowed you to become what you are now, in exchange for favors." If the look on B's face at those words was any indication, 'favor' was a polite way of saying indentured servitude. "But to come here? Or to inform Light Yagami he was needed? To choose to save the loved one of your enemy you believed was in danger? I did none of that."

But the King knew B would take that action and reveal Dad's whereabouts, didn't he? "So that was why you didn't summon me," Light realized. "You didn't want to summon me, but you had him take my father to see if I would save him?"

"I wanted to see if your human connections would overpower your fear of death," the King replied. "And I was not disappointed. While you were needed, that is not why either of you came here. I have now seen what both of you do with your free will, so it's time to make a choice."

"A choice?" Light asked.

B's brows pressed together, a mix of fear and intrigue in his tone. "A choice about what?"

"A choice of which one of you will succeed me by the end of the night. Tell me, Light Yagami and Ryusei Akamine.... which world do you want to belong to?"

# Chapter 47

Light could only stare in wide-eyed disbelief at what he had just heard. The Shinigami King... was looking for a successor? Thinking about everything that had happened in his short life, Light could identify how such a thing would have come to pass. He remembered what Ryuk mentioned in passing about the King saying he could restore the realm...

But what did the King mean by *"which world do you want to belong to?"* Did he... no, he couldn't mean that, right?

"What do you mean by that?" He whispered, "Do you mean that as a theoretical or..." he hesitantly looked up to where he could tell the owner of the Shinigami's voice was coming from, "Do you mean we need to give something up?"

The Shinigami King only seemed amused by Light's worried inquiry. "Maybe, maybe not," he mused, "But for me to decide which of you is fit to succeed me as King of this realm, I need to ensure your allegiances have the Shinigami in mind." Light felt a chill up his spine as he felt the Shinigami King's unearthly presence behind him. "But in the end, one of you will agree. By the end of the night, one of you will be King."

The King didn't need to be direct for Light to understand what he meant. "You have means of making sure one of us says yes."

"I'm afraid I had no choice," the King replied. Light's blood ran cold at the implication, noticing B was almost shaking as it dawned on him what this was. "But with that in mind, which side are you going to choose?"

"Hold—Hold on," B's stammer caught Light off guard, seeing B shaking his head in disbelief. "You don't seriously expect us to make this choice on the spot." His eyes widened as he realized what he just did, talking back to the King before bowing respectfully. "Apologies, your Majesty."

Though the aura around them shifted to annoyance, the Shinigami King made no move to punish B for his insolence. "You do not wish to choose until you have an informed decision. Very well."

Light blinked. He didn't know what he had expected, but that wasn't

it. "Informed decision?"

"I can show you your future should you pick either side," the Shinigami King explained, catching Light's interest. "After that, you can decide which future is the most appealing to you, and I will follow through to fulfill that wish."

"My future..." B took a step back, keeping his head low as he gazed down at his reflections in the waters below. It seemed that as he thought about the proposition more, he became resigned to the idea of accepting the role. "There's no point in that. I don't have anywhere to go."

The Shinigami King hummed as he pondered B's words, which took Light by surprise. But when he thought about it again...

*This is more than a test. It's an experiment!* Light ran a hand through his hair as the truth of the title the Shinigami had given him for so long was given an extra layer he had never considered. All along, the King had been waiting for this moment. That was why he allowed Ryuk to train him; that was probably why he allowed Ryuk to try raising a human as his own. And Ryuk said before, with Aizawa's situation, that if the King had a problem with something, he would destroy it.

Despite B's existence being against the rules as a born hybrid, he was still here. The Shinigami King had not destroyed him.

All of this... their whole lives... was leading up to this. To ensure there was someone to take the King's place and ultimately prove one final experiment.

After all, only two things separated Light and B: choice and if they had something to lose. Light chose this life, but B did not. In response, Light had everything, and B had nothing.

This was what it came down to, wasn't it? Two different circumstances, how would it impact their decisions?

"Alright," Light decided. He placed his hands in his pockets, feeling more than one pair of eyes boring into him, even if only one pair he could see. "I'm curious. The only requirement is answering honestly?" *Let's see if he catches on to my thought process.*

For the briefest moment, Light could see the shadow of the entity with their fates in his hands, a victorious grin spreading across his face as he did notice where Light's decision lay already. "That is right. It

appears your choices have already been made."

"Show me." B demanded, looking up at the Shinigami King. Any fear in his eyes vanished as he clenched his fists. "You're telling me that the futures you show us are what will happen? And no sugar-coating, either. If you are going to show us the best of the Shinigami path to convince us, you have to show us the best of a human life as well."

Light blinked. The King was right. B already had made his choice, but Light knew just as well that depending on what he saw in his future, or if Near's life was on the line, he could easily flip the other way. It seemed the future would be the deciding factor, but in any sense, could Light use this for what he had in mind?

"The future is never completely set in stone. Small variables could change at a moment's notice." the Shinigami King replied, "But the events I can show you, I assure you, would be part of your future eventually."

"Then I want to see it, so I can decide." B looked just past the King and to Light. "You agree?"

Light nodded. He knew what his choice would be, but while he could resist his curiosity, if B wished to do so, there was no harm. The King would only show them the most appealing parts, and Light was already prepared for lies on the human side.

"Very well," the Shinigami King said, "We shall start with if you abandoned your powers, and remained human."

The world of endless sky and water shifted around Light, changing until he found himself in a luxury penthouse overlooking Japan. He looked down at himself, his casual pants and sweater replaced instead with a business suit.

"Glad to know I made it in life," Light chuckled, but he froze when he saw the photos hanging on the wall.

Wedding photos.

Slowly, Light walked over to the far wall, and the photos, eyes wide as he saw himself, smiling and happy as ever... alongside L. Light felt a bright smile blooming on his face as he looked over at those photos again. So he would end up marrying L one day...

"Daddy!"

...*what?* Light spun around just in time for a little boy no older than five to run over to him, holding up a drawing while bouncing on the balls of his feet.

Light bent down to the child to get a better look at him. He looked... His black hair and grey eyes were like L... but he had Light's face? It dawned on him without any shred of doubt what this was.

"Did you draw this?" Light asked, taking the drawing from this boy...his son. He had a son in the future? Well... in a future where he chose his human side. He looked down at the picture, and if the drawing was any indication, his son had a brother...

His son nodded eagerly. "Yep! We were supposed to draw our families in class today!"

"Well, you did a wonderful job," Light warmed, holding the picture in his hands. He had never even thought about having children before, but now that he was here... in the face of his son... he couldn't imagine a world without him.

"Mirai, there you are," L's voice rang from the other side of the room, and in his arms was their other son, who looked so much like his brother but the exact opposite.

Mirai... that was his son's name.

On instinct, Light turned around, about to open his mouth to tell Ryuk everything about what he was thinking, but—

Ryuk wasn't there. And that was when Light came back to reality. The price if he were to choose this life. If he chose his human life and nothing else... he would lose Ryuk forever.

...

B blinked as he looked around a small cottage that seemed to be in the woods, taken aback by how well-decorated it was. Toys scattered on the wooden floor, dolls, legos, tarot cards...

And in the center of it all was Nate reading a book on the floor... with no name or numbers above his head. He looked older, maybe

seventeen, but B couldn't find it in him to even be disappointed by how far into the future this would be. All he could do was stare in disbelief at the boy, more than content to read his book.

But this meant... this meant the King knew about Nate. No, no, no, no... he... that couldn't be true, right? Even with the King's power, he did everything he could to hide Nate! Had his desperation made him put his guard down?!

Nate looked up at him, blinking curiously. "Is something bothering you?" He asked.

B quickly shook himself, "Nah, I'm just tired," he said, sitting on the floor next to him. "Whatcha reading?"

"I'm reading Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein,"* Nate replied, bookmarking his page and closing his book as he rolled his eyes. "More proof Hollywood doesn't have basic reading comprehension. Can we get a movie on the actual book, please?" He yawned, rubbing his eyes sleepily. B jumped up,

"I can get you some hot cocoa, if you want," he hurried towards the homey kitchen, looking around in the cabinets as he tried to collect his thoughts.

This was a future where somehow he was human and adopted Nate? A future... did that mean someone was waiting for him? Did it somehow mean he had a shot at this kind of life? There was no reason for the King to lie about this being his future, as it did not benefit him if B chose this instead...

He looked back to Nate, only to find he wasn't in the cottage anymore.

"What?" He looked around, seeing the world shifting around him and under his feet. He covered his ears and closed his eyes. *No! I don't care about your stupid Shinigami future! I don't care!*

...

Light looked around the world his visions had changed to, watching as the dead world of the Shinigami Realm transformed into a paradise. Lush grass, roads, buildings... Light spun around on his heel as he

looked at the paradise he could one day build.

He looked behind him at his wings, adorned with golden details. He noticed his robes that suited a God. But his attention wasn't on that for long, looking around the world, and Shinigami scattered around the vast outstretches of land.

"Well, look at that, Light-o," he beamed when he saw Ryuk next to him. "You really did manage to fix this place up." He ruffled Light's hair. "I'm so proud."

But even as this version of Ryuk brought him praise, Light couldn't help but notice something that took him out of this altogether.

Despite having all the power in the world, the only one around him was Ryuk. Other than that... he was alone.

But he had always known that would one day be the case, right? That was the price of immortality, whether the world stayed as it was or if he stepped into the role of a King. Even if he found a way to combat death, that was not a sustainable way to keep his loved ones with him. He did it to Aizawa by accident, and Aizawa wanted to get rid of it as soon as he had a way. The only person he knew could be content with the notion of immortality would be L.

Sometimes, people wanted to embrace being human, even if their life was painfully short in the process. Maybe for Light, one day, it would all be a fleeting moment, but... he couldn't sacrifice that. A life with L... with their son... that was something he wanted desperately, but he couldn't sacrifice half of himself to do it. Even if he was willing to, sacrificing his Shinigami side meant condemning Ryuk to spend eternity in this *wasteland!* What kind of son would Light be if he allowed that?

Light smiled as he stood in front of the Shinigami King once again. He knew what he had to do, and it seemed the Shinigami King knew.

"I won't choose," Light said, his voice perfectly calm even as he stared down the King of Gods. "You want me to have an allegiance to the Shinigami, and I do. I would never give up that part of myself, but I can't give up my human side. Humans made me who I am just as much as Shinigami."

"I asked you to choose one, Light Yagami."

"Not necessarily," Light let himself become smug, a smarmy grin on

his face. "All you wanted was allegiance to the Shinigami and for me to answer honestly. That is my honest answer. Besides, why should it matter to you if I choose to maintain ties with my human side?" He placed his hands on his hips. If he had any chance at being a King, he wasn't going to bow to anyone. And if the King wanted this, that meant he had some bargaining power. "After all, to a King of the Shinigami, anything I would have interest in with that world is temporary. Overall, I would spend most of my time in the Shinigami Realm, ruling over it. So how about it?" He asked. "I will take the job, but that's my condition, to maintain contact with the human world and be with my family for their natural lives." He added that last part to ensure the King didn't kill his family in anger.

The King did not answer Light's bargain, but Light supposed that made sense. If B chose Shinigami alone, he would become the ideal option. But as Light looked over at B, staring down vacantly at the watery floor, he already knew the choice B had made.

He stepped forward towards B, "Ryusei?"

"All this time..." B placed his hand in front of his face, a demented giggle slipping out of his throat. "All this time, I could have had a life. I could have thrown this bullshit away months ago?!" He looked up at the King with wild eyes, cackling. "Looks like you have your answer, *Your Majesty!"* but this time, there was no respect, each word laced with venom. "All of this was pointless! I choose human! I'm done with this curse!"

He stopped, his words dying in his throat as his mouth was forced closed. Light looked at the Shinigami King in disbelief, stepping in front of B protectively.

"Enough," Light ordered. "It looks like we made the choices you allowed us to make, and I put my allegiance to the Shinigami given time. Misa can help me improve the human world, and I will work to repair the Shinigami Realm. But Ryusei wants this over with. Do our answers satisfy you, or are you going to punish us?"

B's eyes widened, his voice returning softly. "Why are you helping me?"

Light looked over his shoulder to face him. "If you want to run off into the woods with that kid, then that's your right. That, and I don't want you being King either." B chuckled in response to that.

But from the Shinigami King, there was only silence. Light felt fear

sinking in his gut for a terrible moment that someone he loved would pay the price for his insolence, but finally, the Shinigami King spoke.

"I was expecting this," the Shinigami King said. "The moment Ryusei Akamine saw a future with that *human* boy, even if it meant becoming nothing more than a human himself, the choice fell only to Light Yagami. I will abide by your wish to remain between worlds, as I know one day you will choose to remain here, but as of tonight, you will be bound with the weight of a Realm, and by your own choice, you maintain ties to the human world. Do you understand the responsibility you bear should you choose this path?"

*I can certainly do a better job than you.* Light had to bite his tongue, but ultimately, his choice was already made. He would never be able to choose, and if B was going to choose his human side, it meant Light had to do this. Even though he had been ready to agree to this on his own, he did not wish to know what would happen if they both refused. Someone would have paid the price.

"I understand." Light said finally. "And as long as you agree to my terms, I am willing to bear that responsibility."

The Shinigami King's shadow returned into view, looking down at the two candidates, seemingly satisfied with the arrangement. "Very well."

Light felt a surge of raw power through his veins. Instead of fighting it, Light found it easier to welcome it, deepening his breathing as he found himself thinking back over everything in his life, reminding himself who he was to ensure this power did not get to his head.

He remembered the lullabies Dad would sing to him every night when he was young. He remembered Aizawa and Ide, always there for him and for each other through thick and thin. He remembered Matsuda and all of the time they spent together. He remembered Yamamoto... and all the firsts that came from it, and friendship remained even when love faded. He remembered Misa, who sought a better world.

And L... L, who saw him for who he was and welcomed it in full...

Light slowly opened his eyes, looking down at himself. Though he physically still looked the same, his clothing and the crown adorning his head were enough to indicate the change. But he did still look human...

He was the newly crowned Shinigami King, but he was still Light Yagami.

*Ryusei?* Light looked behind him, seeing B shaking on his hands and knees. He hurriedly bent down to his side. "Are you alright?" But he looked down and noticed what B was looking at.

He was staring at his reflection in the waters, blood-red eyes replaced with dark brown. B looked up at him, those new eyes wide as saucers as he looked at Light, seeing no name or lifespan, and the world was no longer tinted with a red hue.

"Yeah," B said slowly, looking down at his hands and carefully examining them. "I really... oh my god..." slowly, a broad grin formed on his face. "I didn't think this was possible."

"Well, you better enjoy it," Light said, helping him stand, "Because I may have phenomenal cosmic power, but I don't know how to undo that."

B scoffed, rolling his eyes. "Some King you are, you don't even have mastery over your godly powers yet," he teased.

"I became the King thirty seconds ago," Light laughed, "Give me a break!"

B's humor faded, his expression becoming more earnest. "I still can't believe you stuck your neck out for me. Why? After everything?"

Light had to think about that. "It's as you said, isn't it? You and I are a lot alike. If things had been different, I don't know how I would have turned out." He had also thrown B into the ocean for who knows how long, leading to indentured servitude from the old Shinigami King, which felt like punishment enough. "I hope you understand that I will kill you myself if you try anything against my family. But as it stands, if you want to enjoy a human life in peace, I won't stop you."

He closed his eyes, focusing on the cave they had been in before the old King transported them here. Just as easily as he thought it, he found himself standing at the cave's entrance once again, where Ryuk was waiting for him.

"So it looks like I was right," Ryuk said fondly. "It was about time the Old Man looked for a replacement."

"Did you know?" Light asked curiously, "That the King might pick me?"

"Oh, god no," Ryuk cackled at the very idea. "If someone told me

eighteen years ago that the human I picked up because it didn't scream would be the next King, I wouldn't believe you. But," he ruffled Light's hair, making the crown tip off his head, where Light had to catch it, waving his hand to be rid of it. Wearing a crown sounded annoying, anyway. Maybe for formal occasions. "I'm glad I got to do it. I think you'll make an interesting King, Light-o." He looked just past Light and to B, "Want me to drop him off somewhere? I put your Dad by the pool so I would know where he is. I'd probably hurry, given he was on the brink of a panic attack. He only calmed down when I promised to wait for you."

"Oh, god," he grimaced, looking out at the wasteland. "Please take B down to England. I have to go get Dad."

...

"Show me Light Yagami!" Soichiro demanded the looking pool again, but the pool didn't answer. It showed him everyone else, but why not Light?! Where did he go?! Did the King take him? Was he okay?! Was he—

He tore at his hair, his lungs practically paralyzed. Light couldn't be gone. Where was he? He had to be somewhere! He just had to find him, and he could find Light. He couldn't let Light be hurt, or worse... "Show me my son..."

Soichiro stiffened as he felt arms wrap around him, adorned in an elegant robe. And a voice... "Dad, it's okay, I'm right here."

"Light?" He spun around to look at the owner of that voice, and all his fears washed away when he laid eyes on his son. His son, who was safe and well.

But something had changed. Light looked the same, but something was different, more... ethereal? He didn't know how to describe it, but he didn't care, pulling Light into his arms without thinking.

"What happened to you?" He asked, getting a better look at Light. Something must have happened, but what? "Are you okay? Were you hurt?" He cupped Light's face in his hands. "Did that King do something?"

Light smiled cheerfully. "Yeah, something happened, but I'm fine, Dad. I promise. I just ended up inheriting a Realm."

"Inheriting a Realm...?" It took him a long moment to process what Light had just said. "Wait, was that the plan—"

"Yeah," Light nodded, "The King just wanted a successor. B didn't want to do it, so I took up the mantle."

"You were forced?!"

"No," Light corrected him before he could panic, "I wanted to do this anyway, Dad. I promise you, this was my choice." He grabbed some of the grey, dusty soil into his hand, watching it blow away in the breeze. "I could probably do a better job running this place in my sleep."

Soichiro blinked, then he blinked again. "Light... are you telling me you agreed to be King primarily because you judged your predecessor?"

Light nodded, giving a half-shrug. "Being a monarch isn't what I had in mind, but this is a disaster!"

Wait... if Light was the King, then... "Does that mean you can't come home?" *Please, god, don't let that be the case. Don't make me lose him—*

"I already dealt with that," Light assured him. "I can still do whatever I want in the human world as long as I fix this place up. So... think of this like your son got his first real job. It even comes with a free house," he gestured to the crumbling castle in the distance. "Well... it's a fixer-upper."

Okay... Okay, that was alright. Light just got a job, doing what he could to help the Shinigami. He wasn't going anywhere. He was safe, and that was all that mattered. "If that's the case," he brushed his thumb along Light's cheek. "I'm proud of you, son. You're going to be the best King this Realm has ever seen."

Light's grin was radiant as he helped Soichiro stand, brushing the dust off his pants. "Come on, Dad. Let's go home."

OoOoO

It was a long night for the members of the Kira task force, but especially for L, Sachiko, and Sayu, knowing that if anything went wrong, they could lose Light forever.

"When will they be back?" Sayu asked worriedly for the hundred thirty-seventh time, as L had counted to distract himself from his own antsy worrying, pacing around the main room of headquarters restlessly, biting his thumb almost hard enough to bleed.

Almost a full day had passed, but Light had yet to return. Had something gone wrong? Was the journey simply a long one? Crossing realms would realistically take a while, right? That did not mean Light was in danger, but travel distance could be why. It did not mean Light's kiss had been a true goodbye, just a precaution in the event he did not return.

And about that kiss... L hadn't been able to stop thinking about it, even when he knew there were far larger matters to worry about. But whenever he remembered it, B's words rang through his head again. He had done everything he could to deny that the feelings he was developing for Light were that of love, but now that he was in the face of losing him...

He almost gave himself whiplash with the force he snapped over to the sound of his computer chime and Watari's voice. Just to hear something, anything, outside of his own worrying.

And what he said were the best words L had ever heard: *"Light and Soichiro have arrived safely on the roof."*

Sachiko and Sayu snapped up. "Light!" They were both already sprinting towards the elevator, but L couldn't wait that long, throwing open the staircase and running upstairs, ignoring how his body was not cut out for running.

But none of that mattered when he got to the top, seeing Light standing in the rain and helping his father under the covering to avoid getting wet. Light was there, somehow managing to look even more beautiful than before. "Light!"

Light turned, his eyes glowing gently in the rain, and he beamed as he saw L, gasping as L collided with him, slamming their lips together. But it took barely a second for Light to realize what was happening, the reciprocation he had hoped for, returning the kiss in full.

Neither cared that they were soaked in the rain or the thunder clapping overhead. Nothing could distract L from this, from Light and the words he had wanted to say but never knew how.

*I love you too.*

# Chapter 48

The first month of Light's reign taught him more than school ever had. But if there was one thing he could credit human education for, it was that attending university to get degrees in political science and psychology proved far more useful than he could have prepared for, for better and worse.

When he was a child, he had big dreams of improving the world so it would be a peaceful utopia full of only kind people, and Dad would not need to overwork himself until he faced mental collapse. Looking at how his life turned out, that did seem to be the way his life had gone, though the world he was improving was not the world of humans.

But what Light had not prepared for was the amount of paperwork running a Realm came with! This was a realm that didn't have food beyond sand apples, but somehow there were hundreds of rules he had to go through because every Shinigami in the Realm was asking about them all. What rules were Light going to change, what rules would he add, and if he was going to keep the nine levels of punishment. All of these inquiries led Light on a quest for knowledge on a culture forgotten even by the original citizens of the Realm.

"Your Majesty," Light looked up to the sound of Nu's soft voice from the entrance of his study, the first room of the castle to be restored. "Your alarm has been ringing for thirty seconds. It is irksome."

Light chuckled awkwardly, "Sorry, Nu," he tapped the alarm that he didn't realize he had tuned out. He had ten minutes before he had to be in the human world. "I'm looking for a better means of telling time."

Maintaining a work-life balance as the King of Death proved easier than Light had expected. All of it came down to the reminder that he was an all-powerful God, and sleep was not necessary, though unlike Aizawa's previous situation, it proved possible if Light so desired. But why do that when he could spend the day in the human world and night running his kingdom? Nevertheless, having no internal clock and a realm without a day-night cycle meant he needed alarms to remind him what time it was in the human world.

Right on time, Ryuk came flying in through the window. "Light, it's time for school!" Light smiled fondly at Ryuk's playful insistence,

already holding up Light's messenger bag. "You don't want to be late, do you?"

"Of course not," Light slung the bag over his shoulder as he headed out to re-enter the human world, but Ryuk was quick to stop him.

"Aren't you forgetting something?"

It took Light longer than he would like to admit, looking down at his robes that were distinctly not what a normal college student would wear. "Oh, thanks, Mom!" with a wave of his hand, his robes turned to his usual attire of a sweater over a button-up and some khaki pants. Jeans were more casual, but these were comfortable even if Sayu begged to differ.

Ryuk chuckled as he took off into the sky with Light to head across the Realm toward the gates to the human world. He noticed the way Light's eyes glazed over as though he was deep in thought, seeing a world that was already improving from what it once was, even if that only so far entailed the soil looking like actual soil that could grow things. Fewer greys and more dark browns, but it was a start!

He decided to nudge Light a bit. All of this thinking couldn't be good for him. "Come on, talk to me, kid. Whatcha thinking about?"

"I'm thinking about the laws about Shinigami relations with humans." He placed his fist under his chin as he thought about it. "Can we both agree Armonia Justin Beyondormason is Beyond Birthday's father?"

Ryuk let out a barking laugh as the idea of the former King's right-hand man *causing* that rule was one of the funniest things he had ever heard. "I hope so! But what's that got to do with your dilemma?"

"Nothing. I just wanted to see what you thought of that idea. I am so curious who actually managed to sleep with a human, but nobody is confessing to it even when I promise I just want to know!" He looked up towards the sky, which had a bit more color. "But that's not what I'm thinking about. I'm more thinking about how I've got a conflict of interest and need to figure out what to do about it."

Ryuk straightened. Hearing Light's thoughts was always the most interesting thing about raising him, and this was something he had been waiting for. "What do you mean?"

"The purpose of Shinigami is to kill humans," Light mused, "From what Nu told me and the limited scrolls I found, it seemed Shinigami used

to be much more direct and were known to cause suicides, but my predecessor turned instead to notebooks and heart attacks, with more focus on preventing human overpopulation, but then humans figured out more about war and mass murder and they did it themselves, so the realm began to rot as Shinigami had nothing else to do."

Ryuk nodded as it dawned on him what Light was thinking about. "So you want to give the Shinigami jobs, but that would involve killing humans probably on mass? I mean... Misa sure is opening up more opportunities with the way she's lowering that crime rate."

He did need to figure out what exactly he was supposed to do about that. By all accounts, Misa's actions as Kira did lessen murders, and there was no denying that, leaving more humans for Shinigami to kill when needed. As the Shinigami King, he morally couldn't just say that Shinigami could only kill specific humans. Even if he could, that defeated the whole point of death, that it happened randomly and without discrimination. Which was why he elected to remind the Shinigami of this job, but otherwise focus their attention on rebuilding the Realm. They by no means needed to do so on mass, but frequently enough that they still had a clear reason to exist.

This dilemma was probably why his predecessor told him to pick only a single world during his coronation. But Light knew going in that this job would not be easy, and he needed to find a middle ground. So that was what he would do, and nothing would stop him.

However, for the time being, he elected to distract himself from his kingly duties by focusing on his human life. Maybe the answer would come to him once he was no longer staring it in the face. Besides... he had a date with L tonight.

He waited by the tree where he always met L for university, playing his flute and letting his instincts guide him. He no longer needed this instrument to channel his powers, but he was not sure he would ever let go of it. It was an important milestone.

Ryuk chuckled as he noticed the slight blush on Light's face. "Have you talked to L yet about what the Old Man showed you? About Mirai?"

Light stopped playing, slowly placing the flute back at his hip. "Not yet. Come on, we just started a relationship. Don't you think it would be weird to come up to the guy you just started seeing that during your coronation you saw a future the two of you were married and

had kids?" He looked up at Ryuk. "That's just weird, and I don't want to rush things anyway. I'll tell him eventually, but not yet."

Ryuk shrugged. "When you put it that way, that's fair." He nudged Light playfully. "But don't wait like a century or anything. I want grandkids." He looked up and chuckled as he leaned against a tree, pointing to something that caught Light's attention. "In the meantime, looks like we get to be entertained by the Kira and L situation."

Light laughed as he noticed it seemed Misa and L had run into one another on their way to class. Before, he had worried about being a spectator, but his newfound status of being Shinigami King added an additional level of hilarity to watching this cat-and-mouse game. His friend versus his boyfriend in a battle with their pride at stake. Meanwhile, they both knew the other knew they had a mutual friend who wouldn't do anything one way or another. But they also didn't want to upset him, so they had no plans to *kill* each other, just beat each other.

Though, if Light was honest, that was only a change of plans for Misa. Light found from looking through L's shady payroll of criminals he could call to ask for favors that L would forgive anything if the criminal was attractive and intelligent. In a weird way, Light couldn't help but feel immensely relieved, as L did not care whatsoever about Light's previous arrangement of needing to kill every 490 days. Light had worried it would be a dealbreaker, but L was even more attracted to him after learning about that.

*"Sometimes I wish I had been able to have a proper battle of wits with you, Light-Kun,"* L had told him last week. *"It would have been a battle of the ages, wouldn't you say?"*

And Light couldn't help but agree, though he was content with the current arrangement, watching L and Misa talking about magazines while their eyes made it clear they were psychoanalyzing one another. Light decided to wait by the tree until they were done, watching the discussion and chuckling as they both jumped upon noticing he was standing there the whole time.

"Light!" Misa ran over to him, adjusting her wig while Rem stood just behind her. "How was work? Did you finish that paperwork you were worried about?"

Light shrugged. "About as much of it as I can in one night. I spent most of the night trying to read the faded ink on documents, but I

handled the load I was worried about."

L smiled knowingly, kissing Light's cheek. "That is quite a relief." He adjusted how he was holding his book bag to further the illusion he was a normal college student. "Oh, Light-Kun, I have an update on Aizawa-San's condition."

Light straightened. "Has he woken up yet?"

They should have known to undo what happened would not be as simple as removing the magic and being done with it. As anyone would have expected, forcefully removing something the body had grown accustomed to was unbelievably draining, which left Aizawa in a deep sleep through most of the month, only awake for long enough to eat and use the bathroom. Watari kept a close eye on him and assured everyone that he was physically fine; all he needed was rest. However, that excuse would not work for the outside world or his job, so people believed he had mono because that was the first disease related to long-term sleepiness that Matsuda could think of.

"He woke up for four hours last night," L replied, his hands in his pockets as he allowed Misa to tag along. They all had the same psychology class anyway. "In that period he regained more mental awareness beyond the desire to go back to sleep."

Light let out a breath he didn't realize he was holding. "That's a relief," he leaned closer to L as they walked, glancing to the side to see Misa observing their interactions. "What about you, Tachibana?" He had to stop himself before he said her true name. While L was already positive about who she really was, the last thing they wanted was for the paparazzi to bother them. "Anything new with you since we last talked?"

"Nothing much," she said cheerfully. "I'm making good progress with my project as well."

"A project?" L's eyes lit up, smiling mischievously. "What project would this happen to be?"

"Nothing much," Misa replied, smirking as she said so. They both knew who the other was, so it all came down to getting proof. That was the real test. "Just a writing project."

Ryuk knew better than to speak to another Shinigami while L was around to make sure he didn't ruin the game, but Light couldn't help but notice him passing notes with Rem in their respective notebooks.

He tapped Rem with his wing to show him the notes because he was curious, and Rem held out their written conversation for him to see.

**Ryuk:** Bets on who wins? I'm thinking detective.

**Rem:** I have no doubt Kira will be victorious, but I have no interest in your wager.

Light chuckled. Trust Ryuk to start making bets. But his laughter caught the attention of both.

"What do you find so humorous, Light-Kun?" L asked, but just from his expression and the way he traced his lips with his thumb, he already knew Light was greatly amused by his free entertainment.

Communication was ideal in a relationship, but they already decided Light could withhold information for the sake of this game. So he shrugged, "Oh, it's nothing. I was just thinking about some work things."

Maybe L would know what to do about his dilemma in changing, removing, and altering laws. He was always interested in the inner workings of the Shinigami Realm. Though Light *could* talk to Dad about it without any fear of judgment, he wasn't sure he wanted to risk the heart attack of "hey, Dad, I need to figure out how I can balance killing people without terrifying humans." While L would debate that topic with him for hours like it was a game.

And that was the best part of having L by his side. He could keep up with everything Light was thinking, and there was nothing they couldn't discuss, from the menial things in life to contemplating the inner workings of a Realm with a culture long forgotten and how to rebuild.

It was strange to think that L had only been an active, in-person part of his life for a year. Even as a kid, Light had always dreamed of finding L, maybe even being able to work alongside him. But never even in his wildest dreams could he have envisioned where he was now, holding onto the arm of his boyfriend, his friend, and his equal.

It wasn't what he had planned, but maybe going outside the plan wasn't so bad after all.

OoOoO

"Shuichi," Ide held up the massive coffee cup, wafting the aroma towards him. "Come on, you have to wake up. I have breakfast." But even as he said that, he knew Aizawa wasn't going to stir, only taking comfort in the fact this time, it was different. Where the last month had been periods of slumber that put Sleeping Beauty to shame, now his exhaustion was just that. He proved last night he could wake up, so now that he could do that, the real challenge was getting him out of bed.

"Yumi's ready for school," Matsuda said, leaning in the doorway. "Is Aizawa up yet?"

"It's a process," Ide set the coffee down on the coaster, nudging Aizawa a bit firmer this time, "Shuichi," he added a bit more of an annoying whine to his tone, "Wake up. We have to fix your sleep schedule. You can't hibernate all summer. Light confirmed your soul is back to normal, and you woke up for a few hours last night."

But it seemed that though humans were not designed for hibernation, Aizawa was determined to put that to the test. Matsuda rolled his eyes as he bent down, so his head was at Ide's level from where he was sitting.

"You must kiss Princess Aizawa. It's the only way to bring him back."

Ide felt his face turn red the moment Matsuda so much as made that suggestion. "Shut up, Matsuda," were the first words out of his mouth, but Matsuda wasn't even phased by it, twirling his finger in a circle like a magic wand.

"I'm just saying, maybe it'll work."

*Would he even like that?* Ide looked down at his partner's sleeping form, so peaceful with his hands folded over his stomach. He thought back on every conversation they ever had about consent, what they liked and what they didn't. Aizawa was okay with that kind of thing as long as there was no expectation of anything more afterward, which Ide was more than happy with.

Okay. So Aizawa was okay with that kind of thing. Why was his face still bright red? They had been officially together for over a year!

Oh wait, it was because Matsuda was watching. "Matsuda, can you give us a moment?"

"Oh, right," Matsuda gave an encouraging thumbs-up matched with a cheesy grin. "Good luck!" he scampered out of the room, leaving Ide alone, where he did feel much more comfortable in privacy.

Gently, he cupped Aizawa's cheek, noticing him leaning into the warmth. *So you are close to waking up. Maybe Matsuda's idea isn't completely insane?* He leaned down and brushed his lips against Aizawa's, lingering for only a moment before pulling away.

He knew Aizawa had been close to waking up, but he did *not* expect him to wake up immediately, eyes fluttering open as though a spell over him had been broken. "Hm?" Aizawa looked around as he realized where he was, smiling softly. "Good morning, Hideki."

"Oh my god, the power of true love actually worked?!" Matsuda asked from the doorway. But he squeaked as he noticed both staring at him. "Sorry! I heard him talking, so I wanted to see. Are you doing okay, Aizawa?"

"Yeah," Aizawa said, all the while leaning on Ide, his eyes starting to close again. "We can talk when I get ten more minutes of sleep."

"Nope," Ide forced him to sit up, quickly placing the massive coffee cup in his hand, probably the size of four normal cups if the number of times he ran it through the machine was any indication. "Come on, we're going to take Yumi to school and fix your sleep schedule."

Aizawa nodded slowly before he checked the clock. "I can afford ten more minutes." He took a long drink from his coffee before setting it back on the nightstand, somehow still pulling the blankets up over him. "I haven't slept in a year. Let me have this."

Ide could only laugh as normalcy returned to their lives, a weight lifting off his shoulders. This was what normally happened when Aizawa overworked himself and finally got a break. "Fine then," *It looks like I have to pull out the secret weapon.* "But I should probably let you know you've been sleeping for close to a month now, and in that time, Nozomu has been trying *very* hard to learn how to walk. He's not there quite yet, but any day now..."

Just as he expected, Aizawa shot upright as any thoughts of sleep left his mind, grabbing the coffee to wake himself up as it dawned on him how much he had missed in the lives of his kids. "Wait, he figured out standing? What else did I miss?!"

"Light became God and started dating L," Ide said casually. "But more

importantly, Yumi got top marks on her math exam, and Nozomu has not yet learned how to walk."

Aizawa sighed in relief. "Oh, good...." but then he stopped as he processed the first part of what Ide said. "Wait a second. Did you just say Light became God?"

"And decided to date L."

Aizawa blinked, then he blinked again before finally giving a simple nod. "....yeah, that tracks." He forced himself to get out of bed. "Come on, we should get ready to surprise Yumi that I'm up."

Ide smiled, already imagining Yumi's delight to hear he was awake. She had been so resilient through all of this; any moment seeing her happy meant the world. "She will love that surprise," he said, helping Aizawa up, being able to stare into hazel eyes. Those eyes... the proof that they had survived, they *lived*, and they could be a family.

"Normal" wasn't the right word. Their lives would never be normal. But Ide wouldn't have it any other way. If their lives were what the world called normal, they would never be happy.

So what did it matter what the world thought? The world didn't get to decide what their happily ever after was. Aizawa and Ide got to decide, and they both decided it would start now.

# Chapter 49

L looked around the Yellowbox Warehouse for the person he had established a meeting with. So it had finally come to this, the final confrontation with Kira, where he stood alone, without Light or the task force to assist him.

But it was better this way, he supposed. If he wanted the case to reach its natural conclusion, it was better that nobody was around, and though reluctantly, Light agreed with that sentiment. He knew L's plans the same way he knew Kira's—who L knew without any doubt was none other than Misa Amane, otherwise known as Light's classmate, Rea Tachibana.

And sure enough, it was her voice that he heard from behind him in the warehouse. "I know your name, L Lawliet."

L smirked, turning around to face her, placing his hands in his pockets with little urgency. "I see, so you did take the Shinigami Eyes. Was it because of me, or did my intentional misspellings of criminal names in the media become annoying?"

Misa scoffed. "So that was you," though even as she said it, she didn't seem particularly surprised by the confirmation. "To answer your question, I did it simply to maximize efficiency. I didn't need the eyes at all to beat you." She smirked in return. "Did you really think I wouldn't notice the camera you placed in my apartment? I'm a famous idol and am more than used to having stalkers." She took a few steps towards him, her pigtails bouncing delicately in synch with the clicking of her high-heeled boots against the cement floor. "But that wasn't where you got the evidence to boldly come here and agree to my meeting, right? I know the police aren't outside."

L nodded. Good to know she did catch onto that. "Correct. My evidence came during our study session, that same study session where I placed the camera, using that as a means of distracting you from my true goal of locating your notebook to see your Shinigami for myself."

He noticed Misa's eyes widen ever so slightly. That caught her off guard, just as it did her Shinigami, who suddenly seemed to take L far more seriously than she had before. But even the knowledge Rem was protective of Misa did nothing to make L worry.

"From there, I could pinpoint everything you did and your MO by utilizing both your Shinigami and Ryuk, as they were more than happy to speak on the sidelines with Light-Kun," L continued, taking a few steps forward as well as he and Misa circled one another. "But that wasn't concrete evidence, even if the Kira task force does know of the Death Note. I can't submit that as evidence in court." He traced his lips with his thumb. "What actually caught you was the flower fibers on the tape you submitted in response to your meeting with Light-Kun, matching a tree next to your apartment."

"There is no way you used that as evidence," Misa refuted. "The trees near my apartment can be found in other places in Tokyo."

"That is true. The flower fibers in themselves meant next to nothing, but it did line up with a pre-existing suspicion, given the burglar who murdered your parents was the very first victim of Kira, albeit by only fifteen seconds." Now he had Misa's attention with something he could truly use. "Those two factors allowed me to investigate your purchase history and that of your friend, Hana Hinode, who assisted you with the false identity known as Rea Tachibana. From there, I found some *interesting* purchases to make tapes only a few days before Kira's tape was submitted."

Misa crossed her arms, impressed by his deduction. "I knew those tapes were a bad call," she muttered but glanced back over at him smugly. "But what are you going to do about it? Since Kira's appearance last year, wars have stopped, and the global crime rate is down by 40% and getting lower by the day. When I took a break to test the waters, crime returned and doubled when I left. Face it, L, the world needs me, and my work to lessen murders has done wonders for your boyfriend."

So she was going to pull the Light card. Not that it mattered, L was more than prepared for her to pull that. "I am aware of all of that," he matched her smug expression as he looked at her. "I think the real battle comes down to what are *you* going to do? Are you going to kill me? If you are, are you sure such a thing is wise? Light may not be a factor in this matter. He is the Shinigami King, so asking him to prevent death is counterintuitive." There was no harm in bringing up his connection to Light if Misa was going to do it first. Besides, it was more fun to *not* play that card. "However, how do you know I have not already conveyed this information to others before I came here? Or even made a safety measure that should I die, Misa Amane is Kira? Even if you assume you could eliminate the Kira task force and be done with it on the basis Light-Kun is in no way involved, how do you

know there are no others I may have spoken to?" He took a quick step forward, ending their circling and leaning forward into her personal space, grinning intensely. "You could kill me in any way imaginable as long as it is realistically possible, but how do you know I did not plan ahead for such a thing?"

Misa took a step back, holding up her Death Note to show him the rules inside. "I can control you before you die to reveal to me anyone you may have spoken to."

But that did nothing to phase L. "Then how about this? You can't kill me anyway." With those words, he pulled a Death Note out of his jacket and opened it to the page he was looking for, which he revealed to Misa.

A page that revealed his own name written within it, and it was misspelled four times.

And suddenly, Misa's smug behavior changed not to fear but to frustration. "How did you get a Death Note!? Light said he wouldn't give you one!" But even as she said that she stopped, looking at the numbers above his head. "Wait... but this isn't your notebook. I can see your lifespan."

"Correct. This is not my Death Note. This notebook belongs to Yagami-San." And that was something that had come as a shock to everyone when Soichiro revealed it. "Beyond Birthday felt rather terrible about the whole kidnapping situation. As he had no desire to have anything relating to his former Shinigami life, he gifted the notebook to Yagami-San alongside every rule imaginable on how to use it." He closed the notebook and put it back inside his jacket. "From there, I was able to use a criminal who had not yet been broadcast in the media to attempt to spell my name while having a picture of my face. However, as you can see," he gestured to where he knew his name would be in Misa's vision, "My name has a rather nontraditional spelling when paired with its pronunciation." Misa's eyes widened in horror as she realized the situation at hand, and L shrugged. "So, Misa Amane, do you have any other tricks up your sleeve? Unless you were to hire a hitman that could be easily traced back to you, I have won. Which means..." he pulled out an envelope from his jacket pocket, revealing a piece of paper inside that he handed Misa. "Sign here."

Misa took the paper curiously, and her eyes widened as she read over the contents. "What is this?"

L leaned forward so he could see the form as well. "Essentially, it is a contract acknowledging that while I will take no legal action against you, I have the means to have you arrested. Therefore, I can call upon you for favors whenever I see the need in exchange for your complete freedom otherwise."

Misa blinked, then she blinked again as she marveled at the contract for what was an incredible deal. "Why... do you need a contract for this?"

L groaned at the memory, rubbing the bridge of his nose. "There was a headache with a particularly narcissistic serial killer who refused to acknowledge I had anything against him. It was more trouble than it was worth arguing logistics with him every time. Hence, the contract," he gestured to the contract in question. "I have never needed to remind anyone of it, but I would appreciate avoiding headaches. So, would you mind signing? As you can see, I have already signed my own end, though forgive that I used one of my aliases. I can assure you it remains binding."

Once she had her explanation, Misa reluctantly read over the contract to make sure she was not missing any fine print. As an idol, she knew better than to sign anything without looking over the contract with a magnifying glass, which she just so happened to have in her purse. "And I am allowed to continue my actions as Kira?"

L nodded. "Yes. I believe Light-Kun has already educated you on making informed, limited judgments with your killings to maximize change in favor of pointless bloodshed."

Satisfied, Misa began signing her name on the form. "He was absolutely right," she said, adding a heart alongside her name in sparkly pen. "Ever since I started going after corrupt billionaires the world thought were untouchable despite them committing more crimes than all the criminals in the average prison combined, Kira's influence has skyrocketed!" She passed him the contract after blowing on the ink to make sure it dried, and L put it back in the envelope in his jacket. "I'm focusing on improving worker conditions by killing those who abuse their employees."

"Ah, so you are targeting abusers." He nodded his approval. "Very reasonable."

"Thank you!" But her excitement turned to pause as Misa remembered who she was talking to. "Wait... why am I having this conversation

with you? Are you telling me you were on Kira's side the whole time?!"

"I wouldn't say that," L mused. How could he have been with Higuchi being one of the Kiras as well? Surely, Misa would understand that. "But it does so happen I am courting the King of Death. Not to mention I have a particular bone to pick with abuse situations, be it domestic or in the workplace."

He didn't notice that the two of them had subconsciously taken their conversation outside, and they had begun walking along the sidewalk until L winced at a particularly aggressive street lamp shining in his eyes.

"Speaking of domestic," Misa smirked, leaning closer to him. "Do you have any plans of proposing to Light? Honestly, I'm surprised it hasn't happened yet." L raised an eyebrow, and Misa was more than happy to elaborate. "You managed to win the most beautiful man in the world, who just so happens to also be a King of Gods, and you haven't put a ring on him?"

"We have only been courting for seven months, Misa-San," L reminded her. "I do not believe it has been abnormally long by any means."

Misa rolled her eyes in exasperation. "Oh, come on, I've seen how you talk to each other. It's like you've known each other forever." She placed her hands on her hips while they walked. "Plus, I know Light told you about that whole married-with-kids future he foresaw..."

Light had told him about that three weeks ago... At first, L hadn't known how to react. Not only had he heard that in another reality, there was a future where he somehow managed to have a family with Light, but what truly kept L thinking about the matter was how much he had seen it impact Light...and if he was honest, how it impacted himself.

He had never thought about that kind of future. If he was honest, he had never imagined himself in a situation like this. From the beginning of their courtship, he had known that he wanted to marry Light. And if his reasoning was sound, Light revealing this to him indicated he was ready to take that step. Did that mean L should pop the question?

After a moment's contemplation, he decided that now was as good a time as any, having finally won against Kira, closing the case that had brought them together. That did seem like the perfect occasion to ask

him.

But there was one glaring problem with that notion. "I do not know how to go about that."

Misa didn't seem even the slightest bit surprised by that. "Let's use romance movies as an example."

"No, thank you," L interjected. "I have often observed while watching dramas with Sayu-Chan that what media pushes as passion ends up being rather horrifically toxic. That feels like a bad note to propose on."

Misa opened her mouth to refute his claim, but after a moment of debate, she realized that was an argument she was only going to lose. "Okay then... You might have a point there. But what I *meant* is to do something reflective of both of you."

"Propose to him in a downpour after a haphazard coronation?"

"No!" Misa smacked her forehead. How was the detective who managed to outsmart her with bold, almost self-destructive plays the same man who didn't know how to propose to his boyfriend?! And why was she having this conversation with who, ten minutes ago, was her rival? Had they actually become friends during their time in college together? "Wow, you're bad at this." She straightened, deciding on a different tactic. "Okay, so we'll put the how of it aside. What about rings? Normally what I read is a third of a monthly paycheck. How much do you make in a month?"

Wasn't asking a man his salary frowned upon? L shrugged. What did he know about social norms? "A couple million from stock market investments and a million at minimum per case," he did what he could to calculate that number in his head. He had never thought to do so before. "The Kira case is the longest of any. Typically, I can finish three or four cases in a given month, so... on average, ten million is a low estimate?"

Misa looks at him, completely slack-jawed. "Are you serious?" She asked incredulously. "I *just* finished wiping out billionaires only to find out the one guy I can't kill is one?!"

"If it helps, I do not do much of anything with it like the others," L offered, though he supposed that wasn't going to do much. "I am not promoting workplace malpractice or Twitter."

"Do you at least donate to charities?" Misa asked.

Oh! He actually did. "I am a patron of orphanages worldwide," L said. "I began with the orphanage I was raised in but began to spread my influence further."

Misa shrugged. "Alright, I'll accept that. You should consider working to improve the foster care system," she added. "It's a mess. But back to proposing to Light, you're basically saying you can get him anything."

"Ah, yes, but see, neither Light-Kun nor I am often interested in material possessions," L explained, though Misa probably knew this already about Light. "I do not need anything, and Light-Kun is a monarch of unspoken wealth ever since he found that treasure trove in the recesses of his palace."

He could tell by Misa's expression that he was failing miserably at this. This was admittedly not his area of expertise. But he did know Light, and though Misa was helpful with the whole affair, he couldn't help but feel the idea of a ring and an over-the-top dinner like many elected as their proposal of choice was not what Light would want.

From the time he was born, Light Yagami had all eyes on him. Even if not for his ties to the supernatural, it was for his brilliance, his charisma, his beauty... but Light did what he could to hide from all of that and blend into the background as a gifted but ultimately normal teenager. Even when he looked at political pursuits, it was a means to an end for his goals, not for the spotlight. He took on the role of a God, but Ryuk was more than happy to confirm Light didn't even act as a monarch so much as a guide to his subjects, urging the Shinigami to make their own choices.

Light did not want to be in the spotlight. Light wanted to influence, to be able to change the world, but if he could, he wanted to do it indirectly. So it stood to reason Light would not want a grand affair. He would not want the flashiest ring, a loud party to celebrate, or random strangers congratulating him.

L straightened. He knew what he should do.

But first, there was something of great importance that must be done. He parted ways with Misa once they left the Wharf, and L took a taxi to the Yagami Residence. He took a deep breath before knocking on the door. Hopefully, they were still up, even if it was late at night.

Thankfully, it seemed they were, as the door opened to reveal

Sachiko, who smiled warmly as she realized it was him.

"Oh. Good evening, dear," Sachiko stepped to the side to allow him in. "Why don't you come on inside?"

"Thank you," L looked around the foyer for any sign of her other half. "Is Yagami-San home? I wish to speak to both of you."

"Ooooo!" The excited half-squeal was L's only warning before Sayu came bounding into the foyer in her pajamas. "We all know what that means! Dad!" She called up the stairs in a sing-song voice, "L's here for your blessing!"

L tensed, though he did what he could to remain as calm as possible. "You don't have to announce it like that."

But the sound of Soichiro's voice from the top of the stairs threw all illusion of calm out the door.

"He is?" Soichiro stepped downstairs, and it seemed he had been preparing for bed mere moments ago if his own pajamas were any indication. But once he saw L, he smiled knowingly. "I would assume so, given he's arrived so late at night. It would be the only time he could ask such a question and be sure Light wouldn't know about it." He gestured for L to follow him into the kitchen. "Why don't we sit down?"

L obediently followed, waiting for Sachiko to invite him to sit before he did so. "I apologize for coming so late," Soichiro placed a plate of his homemade cookies onto the table, a family recipe apparently. L would not deny that getting his hands on this recipe was an added bonus to his pre-existing plans. "Oh, thank you," he took one of the cookies but waited to eat it. "But as Sayu-Chan has already guessed, I truly love your son, and I am here to ask for your blessing to propose to him."

Soichiro and Sachiko looked at one another while Sayu bounced in her seat. If L had to guess from her body language, she had been waiting for this conversation the moment she caught the two of them in the rain.

After a moment that was probably only a second but felt like forever, Sachiko turned back to L. "When do you plan to propose?"

"When Light returns, assuming I do earn your blessing," L said. "I'm afraid I don't plan anything extravagant. I do not believe Light would

appreciate that with how much he avoids human interaction." That earned a chuckle from Light's parents, and Sayu rolled her eyes, which L decided to take as a good sign.

Soichiro rested his hands neatly in his lap, clearing his throat before he spoke. "Well, you are not the worst person my son could have chosen to date."

L's brow furrowed. "Thank you...?"

"Take it as a compliment," Sayu encouraged. "You should have seen the way he reacted when he found out about my last boyfriend."

Sachiko rounded on her daughter at those words. "Young lady, are you implying you've had more boyfriends?!"

Sayu squeaked nervously with the eyes of both her parents on her, so L decided to interject to save her. "Does that mean I have your blessing?"

Sachiko focused her attention back on L, not before giving Sayu a look that this was not over. "I suppose so," she said, "But having our blessing doesn't really matter. The one whose blessing you will need is Light's. This is his choice, not ours."

Soichiro leaned forward slightly. "I do have one condition." L perked up to hear what it was. He would do anything for Soichiro's blessing to marry Light. What could he be asking? "You are not allowed to marry him while he is nineteen. Wait until he is twenty. I made a bet with my mother over thirty years ago that no child of mine will marry at nineteen, and I intend to win."

"What if I elope before that?" Sayu asked immediately.

Soichiro didn't even look at her, only pointing at her. "No."

Of all the conditions L had imagined in rapid succession, that was nowhere close to any of them. But ultimately, it was an easy condition to fulfill. "You don't have to worry about that, Yagami-San."

"And don't elope in a casino," Sachiko added. "It never goes well."

Soichiro nodded. "Or immediately after narrowly escaping mortal danger together..."

She looked back over at him, "That one can go well."

Soichiro smiled lovingly as his wife rested her head on his shoulder. "Ah, you have a good point there."

Sayu stood up, slamming her hands on the table as she realized the implications of what they were saying. "Mom, Dad, is there something you want to tell me!?"

"Nope!" Both of them sported the same broad smile that simultaneously indicated they were messing with her and was so over the top it could easily be a cover-up that they were dead serious.

L took that as his cue to slowly stand up from his seat, taking a few more of the cookies for the road, to the point Soichiro rolled his eyes and offered him a bag full of them. "Just take them," he said. "Perhaps you can use them to prove you have gotten our blessing already." He placed his hand on L's shoulder, squeezing it reassuringly. "Good luck."

"Thank you, I will need it," L took the bag from him gratefully. "I am not well-versed in social interaction."

With that, L took a deep breath and headed out into the night. He didn't have many preparations to make. Still, he had until dawn to complete everything, as that was when Light would arrive, assuming he did not get distracted in his reading, though with how much Nu despised his alarm, he was doubtfully going to be later than ten minutes.

It took less than two hours to prepare, which left L sitting nervously alone in the bedroom he and Light shared in the tower during the day. Should he make coffee? Yes, he should make coffee. Light didn't need to sleep, but he did appreciate coffee.

He made quick work of preparing a whole pot before he paused, watching the coffee brewing and wondering if he had made a mistake. *Should I prepare the coffee since I know how he likes it, or will that run the risk of it growing cold and Light realizing I have been waiting for him?*

"Whatcha doing?"

L almost jumped out of his skin when he heard Ryuk's voice behind him. He spun around to stare at the Shinigami before quickly collecting himself. "Oh, Ryuk. Does this mean Light is home?"

"Not quite," Ryuk said. "He's stopping by Misa's place to make sure she didn't kill you since he knew that meeting was last night. You should

have seen him. He was pacing back and forth, all worried something would go wrong for one or both of you," he cocked his head to the side as he noticed L's demeanor. "You certainly look tense."

L nodded. "Yes. I plan to propose to Light once he arrives. I obtained the blessing from Yagami-San and...." he trailed off as he realized the glaring issue that hadn't occurred to him. "And I forgot to ask you because you have been with Light all night. You've basically raised Light as well."

Ryuk cackled at L's nervousness, which suddenly made more sense and way less. "I will never understand humans asking their parents' permission about who they marry or whatever," he picked up an apple from the fruit bowl and took a bite of it. "But as Light-o's my kid, I suppose it makes sense." He took a moment to think about it, more to make L squirm than anything else before he waved his hand nonchalantly. "Ah, you just do what you want. Not much I can do about it."

L nodded gratefully, letting out a breath he didn't realize he was holding. "Thank you."

But if Light was almost here, he should be quick with the coffee. It was a good thing he began brewing it now because he could quickly finish it up and do what he could to make himself seem relaxed as Light came in through the window, stunning crimson eyes sparkling with the dawn as he saw L.

L smiled as he saw Light, and he seemed in a remarkably good mood. "Good morning, Light-Kun."

"Good morning!" Light leaned into the room, retracting his wings as he glanced to the side, his brow furrowing as he noticed the bed was untouched since he made it yesterday. "Have you been up all night?"

There was no point in lying about it, now was there? "Yes. There was something I needed to do after my meeting with Misa-San. As I assume you heard from her, it went well."

Light wrapped his arms around L's neck, kissing him tenderly. "I knew you could do it," but just as he was about to lean closer, he pulled away, raising an eyebrow. "But what is this that I hear about you using Dad's notebook to almost get yourself killed?"

"It was necessary," L explained. Of course Misa was going to tell on him. "Besides, only those with Shinigami Eyes have any chance above

3% of guessing the spelling of my name. Now I have a waiver to prove my victory, and nothing has changed otherwise," he offered out the tray with coffee and cookies he had set down on the table. "Would you like coffee?"

Light chuckled fondly, sitting in his usual chair, "Thank you." He brightened when he noticed the cookies. "Dad's cookies? He must have begun making a batch to celebrate the end of the case. But then..." he stopped moments before he was about to take a sip of his coffee, looking up toward L as he realized what this meant. "You went to see him last night."

"Yes, I did."

And that was when Light gestured to the thick leather notebook with a moon engraving that rested upon the table, matching the appearance of the grimoire and many of the books found in the Shinigami Realm. "Does it have anything to do with this?"

*So he already figured it out, or at least he suspects.* "Oh, this?" He gestured down to the notebook. "I remember you mentioned you would need a new book to document your changes to Shinigami Law, as the current scrolls are dated. I figured something that reminded me of you would be fitting."

Light picked up the notebook, tracing the engravings with his finger as he marveled at the craftsmanship. "It is beautiful."

Though L managed to seem perfectly calm, the sensation of butterflies in his stomach was distracting as the moment drew closer. "I believe you will quite like the pages as well."

Light softened ever so slightly as he figured out what he was about to see, and as he opened the book...

Four words. Four words were written inside that would change everything.

*"Will you marry me?"*

Next to those words was a pen that had been hidden inside, weighed perfectly for the way Light always held his pens, and wrapped around it was a black fidget ring.

L figured he should explain while Light was processing this. "I noticed you fidget with your free hand when you are writing," he said, "You

usually prefer practicality over spectacle, so I figured you would appreciate something more applicable to your daily life and your duties." He found himself fidgeting as Light's wide-eyed gaze turned from the notebook up at him. "I... didn't exactly prepare a speech. Do you want one, or—"

He was cut off as Light threw himself at him, burying his head in L's shoulder as he held him tightly. "Thank you." L could feel Light slipping the ring onto his finger, even as he held onto L. "Yes. Yes, I will marry you."

L looked down at Light. Even when he heard the confirmation, part of him couldn't believe it worked. "You will?"

Light nodded, looking up at him with a smile that turned teasing. "But just to be sure, you aren't marrying me just because I'm a King, right?"

L's eyes widened to the size of saucers. "What? That didn't even—"

Light laughed, that same beautiful laugh L wanted to hear until the end of time. "I know. I'm just double-checking," he rested his forehead against L's. "I love you, L Lawliet."

L pulled Light tighter into his arms, almost shaking with relief. He never imagined the day would come when he had Light Yagami in his arms, vowing to spend the rest of eternity with one another. He had always imagined he would be watching Light from afar, fascinated by him but never getting too close.

But now, he couldn't imagine a world without Light in it. And no matter how many years passed, he could certainly be sure neither would be bored, which was the best promise anyone could make.

OoOoO

It was harder to climb trees as a regular human being, but B made sure to perfect the technique in the months since he lost his powers. Those had been the best months of his entire life, and he even managed to set up a small cottage in the woods of France not far from a small town. He found a job as a forensic pathologist under his birth name, so long forgotten that it had no relation to his criminal background, and he managed to set up a stable life for himself.

Which meant that now... it was time. It was time he took that risk for the life he wanted.

Taking a deep breath, he knocked on Nate's window.

Through the window, he saw Nate shoot upright from where he had been stacking dice, hurrying over to the window to open it. And for a long moment, he only stared in wide-eyed silence. "B?"

And suddenly, B was acutely aware of how much time had passed. Would Nate still want him? The King did say the future wasn't set in stone... Had he become too much of a monster in his time as a Shinigami for Nate to want anything to do with him?

"Hey, Nate," he said quietly. It was late at night, so he knew nobody would be awake or around to catch them, but he wanted to be sure. "I know it's been a while..." he could feel his heart pounding in his chest. He had to do this fast before he talked himself out of it. "Nate, I am so sorry it's been so long, and I'm sure you heard about everything I did. But I promise you I am getting my act together. I have a stable job, a house, and..." he realized he was rambling. "I came back for you. Do you want to come with me?"

He was met with silence, and for a moment, B was terrified he was about to be rejected, but Nate answered by holding up a finger for him to wait just a moment, walking over to his desk as he began packing a bag. B let out a breath he didn't realize he had been holding, watching Nate tear out a piece of paper from one of his books and write something down on it. Once satisfied, Nate sat on the windowsill, letting B hold onto him. Good thing he had practiced holding something of Nate's weight while in a tree because though he was still strong, it was not what he was used to.

"Just had to establish that I'm running away, not being kidnapped," Nate explained, wrapping his arms around his big brother's neck. "Let's get out of here."

Though that was the answer he wanted, B couldn't fight the jolt of panic that suddenly took over his very being. "Has life not been better for you? Light promised he would—"

"Yes, yes, L abolished the successor program," Nate muttered, "But now it is unbelievably boring." He rested his head on B's shoulder, making it easier to carry him. "If the plan is for me to be adopted, it may as well be by someone I actually like."

And with that assurance, all of B's fears faded away. He grinned brighter than ever before, ruffling Nate's white hair. "Well, them, consider yourself adopted." He jumped out of the tree, wincing as the superhero landing, while it looked cool, was terrible on his knees. But he didn't even care, standing up easily and beginning their journey. "Let's go home."

# Chapter 50

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

L received the news of Near allegedly running away within what Wammy's House estimated was mere hours after it happened, and immediately he understood what had happened. Roger was correct that running away was out of Near's character, but the way Near had carefully packed and written the note did not suggest being coerced. The idea had been thrown out that he met someone online, ran away, and *then* got kidnapped, but that was even less likely. What were the chances of Near, who had even fewer social skills than L, running away with a stranger online?

No, it was obvious what had happened. However, just to be safe, L looked up to Light while enjoying a breakfast of cake batter waffles courtesy of Watari. "Near has gone missing. Could you use your omniscient pool to make sure he's alright?"

Light glanced up from the case reports he decided to work as a hobby while deciding what to do about how being a political figure in both human and Shinigami worlds provided trouble. "His real name was Nate River, right?"

"Correct. I do not believe Nate is in danger, nor do I want to bring them trouble if this is what I believe it to be," he shook his head as the thought of Near being in danger came to mind. The idea of anything happening to him... "If he truly is in danger, I would not spare any expense."

Light smiled as a wave of his hand caused the stove to start on its own and begin making hot chocolate to calm L's nerves. He placed his hand on L's, his case forgotten. "He's not in any danger," he assured him. "I just checked."

Ryuk took an audible bite of his apple. "Hey, Light-o, you can read thoughts, but he can't."

Light rolled his eyes, "I know, Ryuk, I was getting on that," he stood up, grabbing a large bowl from the kitchen cabinet and filled it with water. Like all things Light did, L found his worries fading away as it was taken over by intrigue, standing up to look over Light's shoulder

as he placed his hand on top of the water. "Nate River."

The water rippled under Light's touch. L's eyes lit up in amazement at the clear image of Nate sleeping peacefully in B's arms as he stepped into a homey cottage that came into view. Even in sleep, Nate was smiling... L softened as he saw how happy the young boy was. He hadn't been that happy since A died.

"I wonder where they are," L mused. "It must have been a few hours since he left, but it seems they are only just arriving." He picked up the bowl, taking in every detail of the forest in hopes of identifying where they were. "Light-Kun, would you say my deduction is correct that it would be France?"

Light looked over the bowl as well. "It would line up with the time it's taken if they could take the train." The image faded away in the water, and Light poured it out to dry the bowl. "I can send someone to check in on them."

But L didn't see any need. "We can check on them through the bowls, correct? I don't see any reason to disclose their location unless we have to." Though now that he thought about it... "Light-Kun, how would you feel about traveling to France during the day? Or it could be anywhere, if we wish to get away from civilization for a while," he looked over to Light, seeing that delightful sparkle in his eyes as he understood what L was implying.

"We have needed to discuss that matter," Light mused, leaning against the counter and the ghost of a smirk on his face. "Dad said we can't officially tie the knot for a year, but that doesn't mean we can't start taking the necessary steps to make sure marriage doesn't end in a few decades." But his excitement turned to hesitance, "Are you sure you want to do this, L? I could reverse it, but I would rather you not end up unconscious for a month if you decide you don't want this. I'm not going to force you to do this."

It was sweet that Light considered such a thing, but there was nothing to worry about. L smiled, placing a hand against Light's cheek. "I know what I am signing up for, Light. And that is my choice."

Light visibly relaxed at the confirmation, and his confidence was back. "In that case, we should probably do it sooner or later. There is an adjustment period, which probably means we're basically having the honeymoon early." He laughed to himself. "We're doing everything except saying 'I do,' aren't we?"

"Actually," Ryuk piped in, cackling as he realized the real implication of what he was about to say, "You are kind of already married. Shinigami King and all, the moment you agreed to the proposal, it was basically made official. You more or less said that by the power vested in you by you—or I think that's how the saying goes—you're married."

Light blinked, then he blinked again in sheer disbelief. "Are you serious? You couldn't have mentioned this before?!"

If possible, Ryuk cackled harder, "I'm sorry, Light-o, it was just too funny to pass up!"

"Your father is going to kill me," L realized, wondering how his genius mind hadn't thought about how marrying the Shinigami King may come with the implication that he had the power to be the minister of his own wedding. "Even if you make me immortal right now, he will find a way to kill me."

Despite L's seriousness about this, Light couldn't help but laugh. "But aren't I the one who accidentally had a wedding during a proposal?" He kissed L's forehead to calm him. "Come on, you know Dad isn't going to care besides being a little annoyed. He puts my happiness over any kind of wager."

L nodded, relaxing visibly at that assurance. Logically, he knew his concerns were nonsense, far more fueled by a desire to please his in-laws than any semblance of realism. Even if he owned a Death Note, Soichiro had not used it yet, and it was unlikely he ever would. If anyone would know that, it would be Light.

But just to be safe... "Our story, if anyone asks, is that we eloped at the Cheesecake Factory on your 20th birthday."

Light cocked his head to the side. "Why the Cheesecake Factory? I'm not complaining, but I am curious." But now that he thought about it, he had a small craving for the bread...

"It was the first dessert place that came to mind," L explained, putting his hands in his pockets, "Not to mention they host weddings depending on the location."

"Do I want to know why you know that off the top of your head?" Even as he said that, he chuckled. "Actually, nevermind. I know exactly why you know that."

"You know you love me. Now," L grinned, leaning closer to Light.

"Should we get started? I suppose it is a good thing you are a king, so you can handle any... strength changes..."

"NOPE!" Ryuk jumped up like a man possessed, moving at speeds Light had never seen from him before as he understood the implication of L's words. "I am not listening to you talking about my kid like that! Not doing that!"

Light watched Ryuk go. He supposed if he ever needed confirmation for some reason that Ryuk was basically his third parent, that was all the proof he would ever need. "Well, that's one way to get rid of him. I wasn't keen on him watching us. But in that case..." he placed his fingers under L's chin. "Should we get started?"

OoOoO

L had a much faster adjustment period to the more superhuman aspects of immortality than Aizawa, largely due to knowing what he should expect and, more specifically, wanting it. Nevertheless, the couple of accidental newlyweds took the time to have a long honeymoon while utilizing their travels to be closer to L's cases while still being able to attend university in Japan.

It was to the surprise of no one that the moment Light told the lie about them eloping on his 20th birthday, Aizawa saw through it within less than a second, even if he said nothing on the matter besides giving both a look that he was onto them.

But because they eloped without telling anyone, that did mean they needed some kind of celebration, which after a minor debate, given Matsuda, Misa, and Sayu were the only true extroverts of the people who would even be invited, ended up being settled for a small celebration on the top floor of the former task force headquarters.

However, if Light was honest, as he stood in the corner of the room and watched everyone had made a beeline to the buffet, it was probably an excuse to eat food. It wasn't like this group of people didn't see each other constantly.

Well, it was also an excuse to see the ever-excitable Nozomu start climbing on L.

"L!" Light beamed as the now 2-year-old Nozomu ran as fast as his small legs would carry him, scrambling upwards onto L to get onto his shoulders. "Hi, L!"

L chuckled as he took the toddler off his shoulders to hold at his hip instead, ruffling the fluffy hair he inherited from Aizawa. "Good evening to you too, Nozomu."

"Nozomu!" Ide ran over and took his stepson from L. "What did I say about climbing on people?"

Nozomu looked up at him, blinking innocently. "I wanted to say hi."

"Still!" Ide sighed, pulling Nozomu close and bouncing him. "It's a good thing you're cute. Sorry about that, Ryuzaki. He gets excited."

"It's quite alright, Ide-San," L assured him, "Your son is no trouble." *He could be good practice for our own sons one day.* He took Nozomu back from Ide. "Would you like a cookie?"

"Yes, please!"

Light couldn't wipe the lovesick grin off his face as he watched L talking with Ide and Aizawa, who joined moments later as though summoned at the idea of his toddler being given sweets. But L managed to convince the reluctant parents that it wouldn't hurt, his grey eyes turned to a striking silver and the constant reminder of the eternity they would spend together. Even now, it was hard to believe that he found someone willing to accept such a thing so readily. Someone who never really fit in with the rest of humanity... just like him.

He snapped out of his musings when he felt a hand tapping his shoulder, finding Yamamoto grinning as he offered Light some of the punch. "You seem rather happy."

"How could I not be?" Light asked, the awkwardness of his previous relationship with Yamamoto long since faded. "I still can't believe he picked me. He could have had anyone."

"Yeah, but I doubt there are many brilliant minds who can constantly keep him on his toes," Yamamoto replied. "Really though, I'm glad you're happy, Light."

"What about you?" Light asked, looking just past Yamamoto to look at the scar that started on his neck. "I see your scar healed nicely."

"You bet! I'm even one of the highest-scoring students in the police academy," Yamamoto grinned broadly. "Training with Aizawa did a lot for my test scores and getting back on my feet. Though I must say," he pouted slightly, "I'm a little bitter I never got to smack Beyond Birthday around a little. But I'm over it." He pulled his sword out of its sheathe, holding it to the sky. "I'll be able to face any supernatural bullshit that comes my way."

"Daiki Yamamoto, demon slayer," even the idea had Light grinning from ear to ear, "Honestly, that sounds awesome." Light turned as Dad caught his eye in his peripheral vision, slipping away from the party with Ma. "Hey, could you excuse me for a moment?"

Yamamoto shrugged. "Yeah. I'll be here with the punch." He raised his glass to demonstrate, gesturing for Light to follow his parents.

It didn't take him long to find them, and he wasn't surprised to see them sitting on the edge of the roof together, in no danger, just watching the stars with Ryuk next to them. "Hey," Light walked over to them as Dad and Ma invited him to sit between them. "What are you guys doing?"

"Oh, nothing," Dad assured him, gesturing to the sparkling stars they were watching. "We're just reflecting on everything. If feels like just yesterday, we were holding you for the first time, and now look at you." Light was surprised to see his eyes brimming with tears, pulling Light into his arms.

"I still can't believe it," Ma said, running her hands through Light's hair as though he was still a young boy. "You're supposed to still be our baby, not an adult with a husband and a kingdom!"

"You guys think time went by fast?" Ryuk asked, flipping around and measuring Light from a distance to make a point, starting small and then spreading his arms wide. "It was like I blinked, and he's big now!"

Soichiro nodded. "You're right, but I don't think that is what we should be reflecting on. I'm more thinking how were we blessed with a son like you."

Light beamed. Perhaps it was childish, but hearing the pride from any of his parents was enough to make him melt every time, softening as he felt himself in a warm embrace.

"We're so proud of you, Light," Ma whispered. "Don't ever forget that."

And he wouldn't. Of course he wouldn't. But someone was missing from this embrace. Light held his hand out to Ryuk, who had been watching from the sidelines, "Thank you for being part of our lives, Ryuk."

Ryuk was taken aback momentarily by the hand reaching out during an embrace with the human side of Light's family, but he gladly joined in, his long arms allowing him to easily embrace all three of them. "Well, isn't this just one big happy family? We may have had a rocky start, but all's well that ends well, right?"

All's well that ends well? In this instance, that seemed more than accurate for what was happening. Light couldn't begin to imagine a world outside the one he had, the one where he felt like he truly belonged.

"Yeah. All's well that ends well."

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all so much for staying until the end. It has been an honor. Have a great day!

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